



Successful Leadership

What is Leadership and why is it so important? What does it mean to be successful in Leadership?

Even though there have been thousands of books written on the subject of Leadership, surprisingly, there is not a clear and consistent definition of what it is, so let's start there.

We say that the five primary functions in the area of Leadership are:

- 1) Establishing a Great Team,
- 2) Setting Direction,
- 3) Aligning the Organization,
- 4) Motivating and Inspiring the Organization, and
- 5) Execution, or Getting the Results that you Need.

In his book *Leading Change* John Kotter defines the difference between a leader and a manager as follows: a leader sets direction, aligns the organization, motivates and inspires the troops, whereas a manager does planning and budgeting, organization and staffing, and controlling and problem-solving. This is a huge difference. Management is an analytical, organizational, and reporting endeavor. Leadership is a forward-thinking, creative, and emotional undertaking, requiring as much emotional intelligence as it does reasoning skills.

Establishing a Great Team

There is nothing more important in growing a business than Leadership, and there is nothing more important in the area of Leadership than establishing a great team. Almost every problem in business comes down to the team. Problems in marketing, sales, operations, etc., almost always results from a lack of experience, talent, foresight, effort, and results on behalf of one or more of the team members.

We often say that the most important question in business is, "Who can I get on my team to help me form a great team?"

As a business owner, you have to accurately assess the requirements of your company at every stage of development, and adjust the team accordingly. You have to have the right balance of employees, consultants, contractors, and advisors. You have to engage the services of those who have the necessary experience and attitudes at every step along the way, and you have to be willing to change the team over time. Establishing a great team is not a one-time event: it is an ongoing process, and the most critical one you will ever face.

Setting Direction

In business, as in exploration, followers look to their leaders to point the way to success. Leaders have to make tough decisions about which products to offer, which markets to serve, how to staff the organization, where to get funding, and a thousand other things. Setting Direction includes defining company values, creating a vision of the future, and communicating both of them to everyone who can help make them happen. It includes developing the strategic and detailed growth plans, writing a business plan to start the business or expand it, and defining the exit strategy.

Leadership is choosing the destination, determining the path to take, drawing the map to get there, and posting that map on the wall for all to see.

Aligning the Organization

Aligning the organization starts at the top and at the beginning, when executives and advisors are made a part of the direction-setting process. Great leaders first align themselves by acting in ways that are consistent with their personal and company values, and then they align their team. They have a great organizational structure in place, and the positions are well defined and filled with successful, high-quality employees.

Once the direction has been set, Leadership is about putting your team in place and ensuring that they all know what their jobs are and what is expected of them. As Joe Namath, Football Hall of Fame professional football player says, "To be a leader, you have to make people want to follow you, and nobody wants to follow someone who doesn't know where he is going."

Motivating and Inspiring the Organization

We all have a tremendous amount of strength inside ourselves, and an incredible capability to contribute to causes in which we believe. We will work long and hard when we see a wonderful possible future for ourselves and for our team. Great leaders recognize this hidden potential in themselves and others; they know what it can mean to their company, and they work hard to tap into it.

When the team is in place and they all know what they are supposed to be doing, then Leadership is about getting them to push the accelerator all the way to the floor, day after day, giving it all they can. It is about creating and maintaining a culture of excitement, optimism, and enthusiasm. As Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart says, "Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it's amazing what they can accomplish."

Execution

In the end, Leaders are held responsible for getting results. Even if they have great intentions, are able to develop fascinating and inspiring plans, and are great at getting others to believe in their vision and join the team, they will be judged poorly if they don't reach their goals. A coach isn't a great coach unless he has a winning season. Results are the final standard by which we are all measured. Leaders have to meet expectations, and they have to win.

Execution is not easy. It is far easier to develop a plan than to execute it successfully. There are always pot-holes, detours, crises, and challenges along the way, but the successful leader achieves great results anyway.

How are you performing in Leadership? Do you need training or coaching? Do you have great team in place and are you getting the results you need? Are you realizing your potential?

If we can help you be successful in Leadership, or any other aspect of your business growth, please give us a call or email!

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