



Newsletter March 2018 Newsletter:

Who Said Leadership Was Easy?

If posed the question, "What makes a good leader?" it is likely your response would include many of the characteristics exhibited by some of the most admired people in the world, both past and present. Individuals such as Henry Ford to Steve Jobs, regardless of industry, share a common trait, success. Ford, Jobs, and other admired business leaders have witnessed tremendous achievement in their respective industries because of their ability to lead people.

However, that begs the question, "How do you become a leader?" Is it a birthright? Or, instead, is it something that anyone and everyone can learn? Everyday many employees are promoted to the world of management, with the majority having little to no prior supervisory experience. In many such instances, newly promoted managers either sink or swim. In other words, they are either successful in leading people or unsuccessful in their efforts. Or, on the other hand, some managers are successful in their role for a number of years and then they hit a wall that causes them to question their ability to lead. Yet, it is in instances such as these that can turn a satisfactory leader into a great one.

In the book, "Monday Morning Mentoring," author David Cottrell discusses the attributes that make a good leader. Primarily, he states that every good leader must: Accept total responsibility no matter what, make good choices and learn to quickly recover from bad ones, foster success for employees because it is "intimately bound" with a leaders success, and keep performance expectations high.

Cottrell stresses the importance these principles have in determining a good leader from a bad one. He states that a leader is ultimately responsible for everything that happens; thus when an individual chooses to accept a promotion into management that charges them with the responsibility to lead a group, in doing so they forfeit the right to look for others to blame. As a leader, it is their responsibility to be an active agent in solving problems, rather than looking for an outlet to provide excuses for the present state of things. Leaders' foremost priority should be to solve problems and identify the origin of the issue later.

Likewise, good leaders learn from their mistakes. All good leaders are human and at some point or another will make a bad choice, but it is how they handle the consequences of the decision that determine the outcome of a situation. Primarily, successful people realize that the process of leadership will come with mistakes along the way, but they do not give up. Good leaders push through the difficult struggles, learn from their bad decisions, and adjust their approach accordingly. Ultimately good leaders understand that learning from mistakes provides them with priceless wisdom that will only strengthen their leadership abilities and the respective organization they work in.



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Moreover, Cottrell asserts that a leader can only witness as much success as his employees. Just as a leader must be accountable for any issues that arise in an organization, they too must be willing to be responsible for the success of their employees. Specifically, those individuals who assume leadership roles must be willing to empower their employees to reach their full potential. Cottrell explains that this can be accomplished through a commitment on the leader's behalf to share their personal experiences and challenges and how they overcame them. As he says, no leader has encountered a situation unique to them.

Finally, a good leader knows that in order to achieve anything in an organization, performance expectations must be kept high. As Cottrell points out, accepting mediocrity is not beneficial for a leader or his/her employees. In particular, a mediocre performance obviates growth for an organization and prevents any real exercise in leadership if mediocrity is to be tolerated.

Ultimately, when managers make the decision to adopt the principles every good leader shares, their ability to effectively manage their employees will not only improve, but so will the overall performance of an organization. It is important for all leaders to keep in mind that individuals' such as Henry Ford and Steve Jobs were not born overnight. And, instead, went through the same trials and tribulations that every leader experiences on their way to greatness.

Reaction Search International, Inc.

5000 Executive Parkway, Suite 450 San Ramon, CA 94583

Local - (925) 275-0727 | Toll-Free - (800) 832-8268

www.reactionsearch.com