

Why Managers Need to be Leaders

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So much depends on any manager today and few these days have the luxury of being simply 'managers'. It used to be so easy.

Managers traditionally make sure things run smoothly, they 'keep the show on the road' so to speak. But there's more to the job now - you have to be a leader.

What's the difference? You need to lead people, not just manage operations, and there's a significant difference.

To be fair you still have to 'manage', but being a leader is possibly a larger challenge. So what makes a leader? We can read almost everyday about well-known 'leaders' from sport or politics, but never stop to think where those attributes apply to us, whether we too are leaders.

A useful starting point is to look at what people say they want from a leader. Leadership writers Bennis and Goldsmith* found that what people wanted from a leader were essentially four qualities.

1. They want their leaders to give them a sense of purpose, a reason for being there. They want to be given direction and to enjoy working.
2. They want to be able to trust their leader - to know she is competent, that she has integrity and always 'follows-through', that she supports her staff, and that she cares about the results of her decisions.
3. Their leader must always be optimistic, encouraging people and seeing mistakes as learning opportunities.
4. Of course, their leader must also be able to convert ideas into actions and results.

There's nothing here about charisma or personality, is there? There's nothing that suggests a leader must hold a public office or even be the head of an organization. Every person who is responsible for other people, in even a small way, needs to hold themselves accountable as a leader. So what can you do to become a leader.

Firstly, how you can provide a sense of purpose for your team? Start with yourself, asking why you are doing the work, why it is worthwhile and what you are trying to achieve. Now meet with your team and discuss:

- the same questions
- what you are already doing well
- how you could improve the way you do things to make work more worthwhile, for your residents or clients and yourselves
- set some goals for improvement and a timeframe
- record what happens, encourage people along the way, see if they need assistance
- measure achievements and celebrate the results

Celebrating achievement is often overlooked, but if people put in effort they need to feel it's all worthwhile.

As the leader you need to thank them and if the team has met it's goals, then have a small celebration. If something didn't work out, don't allow any blame to be laid, discuss why and reset goals to do better next time.

The work done by you and your team is demanding, so as a leader start recognizing people's efforts. If you do you'll be doing a great job as a leader. You'll have:

- provided a sense of purpose
- 'followed through' the a plan of action
- showed that you care about your staff
- been optimistic –trusting staff and encouraging them
- achieved results

Not so difficult? In fact, probably much easier for you once team members start taking responsibility too. So take the time now to ask yourself why your work is worthwhile. But also take the time to care for yourself. Leadership can be challenging.

***Bennis, W and Goldsmith, J**
"Learning to Lead". Nicholas Brealey

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