

Leadership Part : Formal Leadership

By Laurie Cohn

Part 1 of 5

This is part one of a five part series on Formal Leadership.

A Concept of Leadership

Volumes have been written which list and elaborate upon the characteristics of leaders. Walk down the aisles of your bookstore or library and you will see that there are as many characteristics, and combinations of characteristics, as there are leaders. With all their differences however, leaders do have some fundamental similarities.

- ◆ *Successful leaders* have mastered the art of self-leadership and authenticity. Authenticity implies genuineness, reliability, and trustworthiness.
- ◆ *Successful leaders* have taken the time to crystallize a personal vision of the future, which will become the foundation or cornerstone for a shared vision. They are able to attract as well as inspire commitment among the people whose collective effort will make this vision a reality.
- ◆ *Successful leaders* understand how to align and maximize resources to realize the vision. The leader's role is to create alignment between vision, strategy, structure, processes, and people with focus on attracting and maintaining a loyal customer base.

As a leader, you must play many roles First, you must have the capacity to create a compelling vision. If your vision is to excite people, it must take them to new levels of achievement. Then, you must be able to develop and implement the strategies that will guide people toward the vision, analyze the alternatives and possibilities, and set goals that will drive the organization to sustained success. To do this will require that you are able to function successfully in several areas:

- ◆ **A Visionary**
- ◆ **A Coach**
- ◆ **A Mentor**
- ◆ **A Director**

The Leader as Visionary

Leaders who are able to involve people in realizing a compelling vision provide a beacon for the future and a standard of excellence. A compelling vision can motivate and empower everyone in an organization to seek higher levels of performance and achievement. People want to do a good job because realizing the vision is important to them. A compelling vision is inspiring, energizing and provides an image of a better future that causes people to drive themselves to higher levels of achievement. A vision will release creative energies to successfully attain the desired results. It provides a reason for change and exploring possibly uncharted waters with enthusiasm. It gives meaning to work. It encourages innovation. Individuals recognize the importance of their personal contribution to the overall whole. Vision helps everyone realize that their best interests are served by the success of the entire organization.

The key to realizing a vision is strategizing and planning. Your written strategic plan should be communicated throughout the organization to develop buy-in and ownership. You must clearly define your key business indicators, those few vital goals that you want your organization to achieve. These will provide the focus and direction.

What do you want to accomplish? Are key goals clear to everyone in the organization? Have they been translated into specific action steps that people can (and know how to) accomplish? Does Senior Management "walk the talk?" Are vision, values, goals, and actions consistent? People must know by your actions, as well as your words, how committed you are to the values, vision, and goals of the organization. You must set the example and the standards, and communicate your vision to others. Your personal integrity must be one of your core values.

Look for our related "Leadership Concepts" articles in the next volumes.

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