LEADERSHIP | PERSONAL GROWTH | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Leadership is Influence

Leadership is not rocket science, but it is people science.

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Several years ago I had the pleasure of having John Maxwell speak for a leadership dinner. He is an outstanding speaker and has written many books on leadership. At the dinner, he gave a simple definition of leadership:

“Influencing others.”

I thought - how simple and to the point.

However, over the years I have created my own definition that I wish to share:

Leadership is the positive, progressive, ethical influence on others.

Let me begin by sharing three examples of “influence.”

Kay and I just returned from a marvelous cruise. We were told the ship we were aboard had a weight of over 30,000 tons. As we sailed home on our final night, we encountered twelve-foot waves and high winds. It was remarkable to think that a very small rudder was keeping us on course.

I will never forget our beautiful, pure white Arabian stallion. He was outstanding. However, he presented a challenge. Each time I entered the barn, he would lay his ears back, snarl his gums, and flare his nostrils as if he were saying, “You want some of this?” Being the true horseman that I am, I did what any wise person would do; I called Kay. She was amazing. She would walk directly in front of him, tell him to “save it,” put a

lead rope around his neck, and then slip a tiny little piece of metal called a bit into his mouth. Astonishing! That tiny bit took 1600 pounds of fire and rage and turned him into an obedient horse.

In Oklahoma, we have had the worst year for grass fires since 1920. At last count, over 60,000 acres have burned. It was reported in the news that the majority of the fires have been ignited by a tiny stick weighing less than one ounce - a cigarette.

Knowing that a small rudder can control direction; a small piece of metal called a bit can create a different temperament; and a tiny stick of paper can create fire, we must realize what a tiny part of our body called the tongue is capable of doing.

We have a choice as leaders to use the tongue to build up or destroy others, to use our influence positively or negatively.

The one who holds the position of leadership and wishes to be effective must be positive. That person must be engaged in the process of edification or building up. A positive leader will be an optimist and will demonstrate the confidence that inspires others to be all they can be.

In my lifetime, the greatest example of a positive attitude was our 40th President, Ronald Reagan. He made us believe not only in ourselves but also in our country. A good leader must be positive.

A leader must be progressive. You can not stand on the sideline and expect respect from your team. Will Rogers, a political humorist and one of Oklahoma's famous sons, put it this way, "Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."

Today, if you want to create respect and trust from an organization, you must be doing as well as teaching. There is an old saying that states "Those who can't do will teach." If you are going to be a respected leader, you must always be moving.

As leaders, our job is not to create followers, but leaders.

Stay progressive, setting the example in all areas.

Today's leader must be ethical. As I have expanded this definition of leadership, I am more confident than ever that ethics are the glue that holds an organization together. If our definition of a leader is simply "influencing others," then it would follow that Hitler, and even more recently Ken Lay of Enron, were leaders. But leadership is more than influencing people; it must be carried out ethically. Many employees are going to work every day feeling abused by their manager or boss due to poor ethics. Someone who has been placed in a leadership position has violated their trust by a lack of ethics.

A leader must do the following if he or she would create and stabilize an organization:

- Keep your word
- Listen to others
- Be slow to anger

As leaders, we have been given a position of responsibility, the biggest being to create an environment that allows people to realize their dreams. If we have been granted the position of "influencing others," let's do it positively, progressively, and ethically.

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Bob Goshen is a man who tells it like it is. It is obvious he is a man who has earned the right to talk the talk because he has walked the walk. He speaks with the innate authority of someone who has seen battle, and has the scar tissue to prove it. He understands leadership, at the intellectual level, at the heart level, and at the gut level. He knows what works, and what doesn't work. And more than anything else, he understands the power of leadership and the value of common sense in a high tech world where it is believed all problems can be solved with the keystroke of a computer. Check out more about Bob at his website: http://www.bobgoshen.com/