

## ***Building Excellence***

Leaders do not command excellence, they build excellence. Excellence is "being all you can be" within the bounds of doing what is right for your organization. To reach excellence you must first be a leader of good character. You must do everything you are supposed to do. An organizations will not achieve excellence by figuring out where it wants to go, then having leaders do whatever they have to in order to get the job done, and then hope their leaders acted with good character. This type of thinking is backwards. Pursuing excellence should not be confused with accomplishing a job or task. When you do planning, you do it by backwards planning. But you do not achieve excellence by backwards planning. Excellence starts with leaders of good and strong character who engage in the entire process of leadership. And the first process is being a person of honorable character.

### **Waste no time arguing what a good man should be. Be one. - Marcus Aurelius**

Character develops over time. Many think that much of a person's character is formed early in life. However, we do not know exactly how much or how early character develops. But, it is safe to claim that character does not change quickly. A person's observable behavior is an indication of her character. This behavior can be strong or weak, good or bad. A person with strong character shows drive, energy, determination, self-discipline, willpower, and nerve. She sees what she wants and goes after it. She attracts followers. On the other hand, a person with weak character shows none of these traits. She does not know what she wants. Her traits are disorganized, she vacillates and is inconsistent. She will attract no followers.

A strong person can be good or bad. A gang leader is an example of a strong person with a bad character, while an outstanding community leader is one with both strong and good characteristics. An organization needs leaders with both strong and good characteristics, people who will guide them to the future and show that they can be trusted.

### **Courage - not complacency - is our need today. Leadership not salesmanship. - John F. Kennedy**

To be an effective leader, your followers must have **trust** in you and they need to be sold on your vision. Korn-Ferry International, an executive search company, performed a survey on what organizations want from their leaders. The respondents said they wanted people who were both **ethical** and who convey a **strong vision** of the future. In any organization, a leader's actions set the pace. This behavior wins trust, loyalty, and

ensures the organization's continued vitality. One of the ways to build trust is to display a good sense of character composed of beliefs, values, skills, and traits:

**Beliefs** are what we hold dear to us and are rooted deeply within us. They could be assumptions or convictions that you hold true regarding people, concepts, or things. They could be the beliefs about life, death, religion, what is good, what is bad, what is human nature, etc.

**Values** are attitudes about the worth of people, concepts, or things. For example, you might value a good car, home, friendship, personal comfort, or relatives. Values are important as they influence a person's behavior to weigh the importance of alternatives. For example, you might value friends more than privacy, while others might be the opposite.

**Skills** are the knowledge and abilities that a person gains throughout life. The ability to learn a new skill varies with each individual. Some skills come almost naturally, while others come only by complete devotion to study and practice.

**Traits** are distinguishing qualities or characteristics of a person, while character is the sum total of these traits. There are hundreds of personality traits, far too many to be discussed here. Instead, we will focus on a few that are crucial for a leader. The more of these you display as a leader, the more your followers will believe and trust in you.

### **Traits of a Good Leader**

Compiled by the Santa Clara University and the Tom Peters Group:

- **Honesty** - Display sincerity, integrity, and candor in all your actions. Deceptive behavior will not inspire trust.
- **Competent** - Your actions should be based on reason and moral principles. Do not make decisions based on childlike emotional desires or feelings.
- **Forward-looking** Set goals and have a vision of the future. The vision must be owned throughout the organization. Effective leaders envision what they want and how to get it. They habitually pick priorities stemming from their basic values.
- **Inspiring** - Display confidence in all that you do. By showing endurance in mental, physical, and spiritual stamina, you will inspire others to reach for new heights. Take charge when necessary.
- **Intelligent** - Read, study, and seek challenging assignments.

- **Fair-minded** - Show fair treatment to all people. Prejudice is the enemy of justice. Display empathy by being sensitive to the feelings, values, interests, and well-being of others.
- **Broad-minded** - Seek out diversity.
- **Courageous** - Have the perseverance to accomplish a goal, regardless of the seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Display a confident calmness when under stress.
- **Straightforward** - Use sound judgment to make a good decisions at the right time.
- **Imaginative** - Make timely and appropriate changes in your thinking, plans, and methods. Show creativity by thinking of new and better goals, ideas, and solutions to problems. Be innovative!

### ***Attributes***

Attributes establish what leaders are, and every leader needs at least three of them:

#### **Standard Bearers**

establish the ethical framework within an organization. This demands a commitment to live and defend the climate and culture that you want to permeate your organization. What you set as an example will soon become the rule as unlike knowledge, ethical behavior is learned more by observing that by listening. And in fast moving situations, examples become certainty. Being a standard bearer creates trust and openness in your employees, who in turn, fulfill your visions.

#### **Developers**

help others learn through teaching, training, and coaching. This creates an exciting place to work and learn. Never miss an opportunity to teach or learn something new yourself. Coaching suggests someone who cares enough to get involved by encouraging and developing others who are less experienced. Employees who work for developers know that they can take risks, learn by making mistakes, and winning in the end.

#### **Integrators**

orchestrate the many activities that take place throughout an organization by providing a view of the future and the ability to obtain it. Success can only be achieved when there is a unity of effort. Integrators have a sixth sense about where problems will occur and make their presence felt during critical times. They know that their employees do their best when they are left to work within a vision-based framework.