

The Leadership Challenge- How to Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations

by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1989

The following are excerpts from the above work. We feel that this information is helpful to leaders exploring their leadership style and practice.

Myths, Traditions and Realities

Traditional Management Myth

Reality

Ideal organization is orderly and stable	Challenging the process, about changing times and shaking up the organization
Leaders as renegades who magnetize a band of followers with courageous acts	leaders attract followers because of their deep respect for the aspirations of others
Focuses attention on the short term - ROI	Effective leaders had a long-term future orientation. They look beyond the horizon of the present
Leaders are prescient visionaries	Vision can spring from original thinking or represent the inspiration of someone else - it can be celestial or mundane
Leaders ought to be cool, aloof and analytical - separating emotion from work	Effective leaders describe feelings of inspiration, passion, elation, intensity, challenge, caring, kindness and even love
Leaders are charismatic- they possess some special gift	Leaders dynamism does not come from special powers. It comes from a strong belief in a purpose and willingness to express that conviction
Job of management is primarily one of control	Effective leaders know that the more they control others, the less likely it is that people will excel - Leaders do not control they empower others to act.
Myth tells us that it is lonely at the top	The most effective leaders are involved and in touch with those they lead. They care deeply about others, and they often refer to those with who they work as family
Leaders direct and control others by giving orders and by issuing policies and procedures	Leader's deeds are far more important than their words. Credibility of action is the single most significant determinant of whether a leader will be followed over time.
Superior position - when you are on the top you are automatically the leader	Leadership is not a place but a process. It involves skills and abilities that are useful whether one is in the executive suite or on the front line

Leadership appears to be the art of getting others to want to do something that you are convinced should be done

**Vance Packard
The Pyramid Climbers**

How do you get other people to want to follow you? How do you get other people, by free will and free choice, to move forward together on a common purpose? Just how do you get others to want to do things?

By studying the time when leaders performed at their personal best, we were able to identify five practices common to most extraordinary leadership achievements. When leaders do their best they

- challenge the process,
- inspired a shared vision,
- enabled others to act,
- modeled the way and
- encouraged the heart

Asking leaders about their personal best is only half the story. Leadership is a relationship between leader and followers. A complete picture of leadership can be developed only if we ask followers what they look for or admire in a leader. Our research shows that the majority of us want leaders who are honest, competent, forward looking, and inspiring. In short we want leaders who are credible and who have a clear sense of direction.

Challenging the Process

Although the distinctive competencies of a person may fit the needs of the moment, those who lead others to greatness seek challenge. Change from the status quo. They are people who are willing to step out into the unknown and take risks, to innovate and experiment in order to find new and better way of doing things.

The leader's primary contribution is in the recognition of good ideas, the support of those ideas, and the willingness to challenge the system in order to get new products, processes, and services adopted. In this sense, it might be more accurate to call them the early adopters of innovation

Inspiring a Shared Vision

Every organization, every social movement begins with a dream. The dream or vision is the force that invents the future. In some ways leaders live their lives backwards. They see pictures in their minds' eye of what the results will look like even before they have started their projects. Their clear image of the future pulls them forward. A person with no followers is not a leader. Leaders inspire a shared vision. They breathe life into what are the hopes and dreams of others and enable them to see the exciting possibilities that the future holds. Leaders get others to buy into their dreams by showing how all will be served by a common purpose. Only through an intimate knowledge of their dreams, their hopes, their aspirations, their visions, their values is the leader able to enlist their support. - you can't light a fire with a wet match.

Enabling Others to Act

Developed a one word test of whether someone was becoming a leader - the word WE. They encourage collaboration, build teams, and empower others. They enable others to act. In addition, the data suggests that based on others' perceptions of leaders that this is the most significant of the 5 factors.

Modeling the Way

Leaders must have detailed plans. They must steer projects along the course, measure performance, raise funds, and take corrective action. Many conventional management practices are certainly useful. Yet there is an even more demanding leadership task if a person is to direct the course of action. The leader must model the way. "Your job gives you authority. Your behavior earns you respect". Being a role model means paying attention to what you believe is important. It means showing others through your behavior that you live your values. Tom Peters, co-author of *In Search of Excellence* summarized this practice superbly when he says, "The only magic is brute consistence, persistence, and attention to detail." Leaders act in ways that are consistent with their beliefs, they are persistent in pursuit of their vision, and they are always vigilant about the little things that make a big difference."

Encouraging the Heart

People become exhausted, frustrated, and disenchanted. They are often tempted to give up. Leaders must encourage the heart of their followers to carry on.

Our research has shown us that leadership is an observable, learnable set of practices. Leadership is not something mystical and ethereal that cannot be understood by ordinary people.

We found the following behavioral commitments in the personal best leadership cases:

1. challenge the process,
 - Search for opportunities
 - Experiment and take risks
2. inspired a shared vision,
 - Envision the future
 - Enlist others
3. enabled others to act,
 - Foster collaboration
 - Strengthen others
4. modeled the way and
 - Set the example
 - Plan small wins
5. encouraged the heart
 - Recognize individual contributions
 - Celebrate accomplishments