Key Principles of Leadership

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The article focuses on the various aspects of leadership, describing how imperative good leadership has become to any modern organisation. It highlights the key principles that successful leaders take into consideration to make best use of the resources, keep their employees motivated and manage the risk. The author has attempted to stress on to the fact that a good leader is one who nurture the talents of those who are not only bright, but probably who’s stars are shining brighter than his own.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is an organization’s lifeline, the critical bridge that spans all organizational levels to cross over from the ideal world of vision to the real world of making it happen. Forming the bridge, leaders throughout the organization define, communicate and clarify the vision. They then provide clear direction and consistent support for the people attempting to realize the vision. The mantle of leadership carries the great responsibility of building trust and meeting the expectations of people throughout the organization.

Being an effective, vital leader demands skills and knowledge in critical areas such as coaching and reinforcing, building strong relationships, developing organizational talent, encouraging initiative, and delegating and sharing responsibility and authority. The effectiveness also depends on specific communication skills and relationship behaviors that will motivate people to do their best, support them through difficult situations, build mutual trust and inspire commitment to organizational objectives.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Successful leaders focus on coaching, reinforcing and supporting people who are encountering new challenges or working more independently. They relinquish and delegate tasks others can do and encourage people to take appropriate risks without penalty. These leaders make people feel important, valued, and respected. They inspire full commitment by practicing the following key principles:-

- Maintain or enhance self-esteem.
- Listen and respond with empathy.
- Ask for help and encourage innovation.
- Share thoughts, feelings and rationale.
- Provide support without removing responsibility.
These key principles address the personal needs. When leaders use them effectively, they support people through difficult situations, build trust and inspire commitment to actions and ideas.

**Maintain or enhance self-esteem**

Self-esteem is defined as having a good opinion of oneself. People who feel good about themselves are motivated, productive, cooperative and committed.

Leaders, who maintain other’s self-esteem, demonstrate sensitivity to people’s self-worth, especially in developmental or problem discussions. Effective leaders make these types of discussions productive and enhance self-esteem in the process by focusing on facts, not people and by specifically acknowledging others and their good ideas. They express confidence in people’s abilities and treat them with respect.

Leaders who use this Key principle attain:

- Open lines of communication
- Inspired commitment to action
- Reduced defensiveness
- Increased cooperation among team members

**Listen and respond with empathy**

Leaders, who take time to really listen to people, then convey understanding and empathy have grasped the heart of open, two-way communication. Responding empathetically and acknowledging people’s concerns and feelings as well as the situations builds trust and promotes cooperation.

Leaders using these key principles help to defuse negative emotions, such as anger, resentment, frustration, and embarrassment, before they cause significant problems.

Leaders who use this key principle effectively get:

- Reduced defensiveness.
- Enhanced self-esteem.
- Encouraged cooperation.
- Sharing of ideas, solutions and actions.

**Ask for help and encourage involvement**

Involving people in day-to-day activities and decisions is the key to discovering effective solutions to problems, gathering ideas, and getting the job done. Asking people for help in solutions ranging from major cultural or technological changes to small but important improvements allows leaders to tap people as valuable resources, while inspiring commitment and maintaining others self-esteem.

Leaders who ask for inputs gain buy-in and make people feel valued. When people “own” an idea, they give their best effort. And, when solutions are not feasible, it is still to maintain other’s self esteem by explaining why and following up by seeking additional ideas.

Leaders who use this key principle help others to:

- Encourage people to become involved in making work solutions.
- Improve teamwork and collaboration.
- Enhance self-esteem.
- Encourage brainstorming.
Share thoughts, feelings and rationale

Leaders who sincerely use this key principle demonstrate confidence and trust in people by sharing issues and problems, rationale behind decisions, personal vision, information that might not be a common knowledge.

*Having information that is not available to others put leaders in a position that demands good judgment and sincerity. If people perceive insincerity or a hidden agenda they will feel manipulated and the value of disclosing will be lost.*

People who do not share their thoughts, feelings or rationale in matters that affect others might be perceived as untrustworthy. Sharing or disclosing prevents misunderstandings and reduces resistance.

Leaders using this key principle help to:

- build trust.
- communicate openly.
- express concerns.

Provide support without removing responsibility

People want and need leaders support effective leaders support people’s efforts without taking over, particularly in difficult or risky situations. Support comes in many forms, coaching people to overcome resistance, paving the way to build working partnerships, or encouraging people to see a job through in challenging circumstances.

Coupling responsibility with support encourages people to take ownership of their work and creates a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem. People with ownership are enthusiastic about taking on new responsibilities and helping to determine how work is done.

Leaders using this key principle help to:

- Provide job ownership
- Enhance work satisfaction
- Increase participation and commitment.

To sum, it can be said that a good leader is one who nurtures the talents of those whose stars are shining not only bright, but probably, are shining brighter than his own.