

Seven strategies of effective leadership

The concept of leadership has been debated since the recording of time. With so much debate you would be justified in assuming that we would have a clear definition of what it means to be an effective leader. Not so! Despite reams of research the concept of leadership still remains as elusive now as it did to the cave dwellers at the dawn of civilisation. There are, however, certain characteristics common to most leaders. Characteristics which can be learnt. Here's seven to get you started on your path to effective leadership.

1 Insight. Insight is your ability to accurately see events, circumstances and people and make sense of them. This is your ability to look not only at the surface events but also to read the unspoken messages. Insight is about developing your self-awareness, understanding of others and sensory acuity.

#2 Initiative. Initiative is taking meaningful action, and taking it first. This means being prepared to make things happen even if others may not back you or believe what you are doing is right. In taking such action there are two things to consider; responsibility and risk. Leaders are accountable for the things they say and do. They take the 'I'll-see-that-it-gets-done' attitude. In doing so, they are prepared to leave their comfort zone.

#3 Inspiration. This is more than motivation, it's a feeling, an experience. In its literal sense, inspiration means to breathe life into, and this is what effective leaders do – breathe life into every thing they do and everybody they lead. They communicate their vision through trust, spirit, energy, zeal and enthusiasm.

#4 Involvement. If people are to be led toward a vision, they must have ownership in that vision. Guidance is yours, choice is theirs. Effective leaders draw in all stakeholders in the vision, listen to their input and allow people into the decision making processes.

#5 Integrity. Personal integrity, when you boil it down, is really just doing what you will say you will do. This means keeping your word, honouring your contracts and upholding commitments. When what you say, do and believe is in alignment, then you are 'walking your talk'; a rarity in a world where talk is cheap.

#6 Improvisation. Effective leadership is about keeping an eye to the future whilst living in the now. Living in the now means doing it now and this often requires creative improvisation for things to happen. Effective leaders don't wait until everything is just right, they know that such behaviour can only lead to procrastination and continuing delays. Effective leaders make the best of what they've got, when they've got it.

#7 Implementation. All the words in the world are worthless without action. Effective leadership is about being action orientated and modelling the action they want to see in others. Effective leaders embrace Ghandi's dictum "*Be the change you want to see in the world*". They understand that in making decisions they then must act upon them with a sense of urgency. An effective leader would never leave the scene of a decision without making at least some action toward the realisation of that decision.

Effective leadership is certainly an elusive topic, obtaining the above characteristics, however, will help you pin it down. One thing though is certain. The world needs effective leaders. Leaders with the vision, drive and commitment to create a better world. Come and explore the leader in you. There are a lot of people waiting for you.