

THE PARLIMENT PAGES

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Leadership

“We live in a jaded world when it comes to leadership”, as stated by Chad Storlie. We have all heard the person who delivers incredible advice on team leadership, recites maxims on how to enable employees, and then, in episodes of critical leadership practice, fails horribly to lead even by the most fundamental measures. Too many people in significant leadership roles, from Army generals to government officials to CEOs to non-profit executives have talked a great leadership “game” only to have their own leadership behavior fall woefully short of even the most basic expectations. Being a leader means more than flowery words, more than motivating speeches and more than reciting classic quotes from Patton etc. Leaders who truly care about leading do so with humility, compassion, a focus on results, the mind of a teacher, the ethics of a child, a lack of fear to enact difficult decisions and a dedication to promote the team’s results over their own career aspirations.

True leaders focus on the actual exercise of leadership that concentrates on treating people with respect, achieving goals, innovating, improving, serving customers, teaching, and developing people for more and greater challenges. A true leader focus on action, open discussion, front-line presence, and proof of results.

The following are a few tips on leadership.

1. **Humility** is the constant and consistent recognition that you do not have all the information, insight, and background to solve every problem on the organization on your own. A leader recognizes that others are essential to success. A leader’s passion to explore, analyze, and improve a situation with insight, contributions, and focus from others drives success. The choice a leader makes on how to handle mistakes in front of the team is a key exercise of a leader. A leader who understands mistakes in front of a group displays humility and a sign of honesty and fearlessness, that allows an organization to move successfully.

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2. **Lead without fear** – Fear destroys organizations, initiatives, and people. Teams that are afraid will not act, will not innovate, and will not learn because they are afraid of failure. Leaders work themselves and their teams through fear because success comes when the fear of the unknown, fear of the competition, and fear of failure are discarded and the potential of success, not fear, is embraced. Leaders who live in fear of failure paralyze not only themselves, but their entire team.

3. **Lead to change** – Change arises with the activities on organization undertakes as critical factors in its environment transformation over time. Leading to change is the process of aligning the business purpose with new requirements, consumer demands, competitive factors, cost factors, employee talent, and cultural issues to ensure the organization can continue to successfully execute its purpose.

4. **Lead each person** – Leadership is a process where a person applies talents, technologies, and skills to bring an organization towards a set of defined goals. Leadership is a group activity that must be exercised towards the styles, feelings, and necessity of an individual on the team. A leader reaches and interacts with each team member according to their styles to create an environment where all team members believe they are essential, critical, and valued members. Always lead each person as an individual according to each person's needs.

5. **Lead for today** – Leaders need to lead for today, improve for today and make others better for today. Leading for today also drives a leader to be an immediate problem solver, because you may not be present tomorrow to fix the problem. Real leaders do not talk leadership. Real leaders do leadership. The best way a leader impacts an organization is to adopt a humble approach, using proof to excite the team, leading without fear, leading with a focus on each person's unique needs and leading with a focus on accomplishing improvements today. In the leadership club, deeds not words, and actions not maxims, are what drive a team forward to success.

5 Takeaways from 2020

Here are some excerpts from an article Brian McCauley of Pro Sales thought would be useful to look back over this past year and pick some key takeaways that could springboard you into 2021.

1. Be Different. Build a differentiated sales message that encompasses you, the company you work for, and the products you sell. The key here is *meaningful* differences – not the same old song and dance of “we have great service”, “we have great products”, and “we have fair prices.” Know the competition, know how you are different, and communicate impactful reasons why customers will be better off buying from you.

2. Do not Make Excuses. Excuses are just a way to let ourselves off the hook for performance not up to standards. People do not care about excuses; they care about results. Hold yourself accountable and own your results.

3. Know Your Product and How to Sell It. Product knowledge is important. You must know your product, what does it do, what does it not do, what it competes against, how it stacks up, etc. You must know your products inside and out. However, I would offer that it is not the most important determiner of sales success. How you communicate these differences, and what you choose to focus on during sales presentations, is most important. You can determine what that is by asking questions, listening to the customer’s responses, and observing what you see. Show your customer that you care about them, and their business, and are looking for ways to help them be more successful and then tailor both your company story and product presentations to their situation and the issues they are facing. That is the sign of a true sales professional.

4. Show Up. It is often said that showing up is half the battle. Showing up means you work hard every day, seek new business opportunities every day, and work efficiently every day. When things go sideways, as they do from time to time, showing up also means not hiding from a negative situation. Get in front of it, attack it head on, fix it, and move on. Nobody likes bad news, but people generally deal with bad news better when they know about it early and can plan for it. Working

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through bad news is also easier when the customer knows the salesperson is not hiding from it, but instead is working diligently to fix it.

5. Positive Attitude. It is often said that life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we react to it, and at its core that is our attitude. That is played out in the story about two friends out on a hike. They come across a bear and one friend bends over to tie his shoes tighter. The other friend reminds him he cannot outrun a bear. The first friend replies “I’m not worried about outrunning the bear, I need to outrun you.” 2020 was a challenging year in many ways and it appears we will be dealing with similar challenges for at least the first half of 2021. We do not have a choice in that reality, but we can choose how we react to that reality.

Observations from Chuck

- 1) Bible on the desk – If you see a bible on the desk and they start quoting scripture, put your hands in your pocket. They are going to steal all your money.
- 2) Give atta boys out regularly – It has been proven that a tap on the back or some human touch lifts people’s spirit.
- 3) Save for retirement – I will be 70 in June. You get to a retirement quicker than you might think. The statistics show over 65% of retiree’s still having debt. Plan to retire with no debt. It will make your golden years a lot better.
- 4) If you have a partner, find one that has skillsets you do not have. This will save a lot of overlap at work. I had a great partner in, Jim Bleech, years ago. He had a great set of skills that I did not possess. We worked very well together for the years we were partners.
- 5) Start with a buy sell agreement. Following up on #4 this was the first thing we did before we started the company. It helped when Jim wanted to retire. We remain friends to this day.
- 6) Change is good – The adage is you are either green and growing or red and rotten. My advice is always to be green. Try new things and experiences that will keep you green.

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