

Leadership—“What Does It Take”

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There are as many different definitions of leader as there are people to define them. An example of this can be found with President Bush. There are many different views on his leadership skills. In the movie Fahrenheit 9/11, Bush is viewed from the antagonist point of view and for those people who are pro war Bush appears to be doing the right thing. This is the protagonist view where he responded to force with force. Whereas, the antagonists to Bush's leadership would argue that his face delivers an incongruent message from his words and that this is ineffectual leadership. When you watch him deliver the sad messages to the American people of lives lost in Iraq, you will notice that his eyes are smiling. The definition of leadership is personal; it is based on one's opinions and personality.

One definition of **Leadership**¹ is the “process of social influence² in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task.” Another definition more inclusive of followers comes from Alan Keith of Genentech who said: “Leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen.”³ At Peer Mentor.net we support people in the development of leadership skills. We train the subset of skills necessary to sustain effective leadership.

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leadership>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_influence

³ Kouzes, J., and Posner, B. (2007). The Leadership Challenge. CA: Jossey Bass.



Social influence occurs when an individual's thoughts or actions are affected by other people. Leaders need to learn and access these skills in order to empower others. The very best leaders know how to empower others to lead and therefore gather strong leaders around them who "make things happen" towards positive outcomes.

So what makes a good leader? Peter Urs Bender, in his book **Leadership From Within**, believes that the best leaders demonstrate these five key attributes. Good leaders have the following attributes:

- Raise Awareness (need to know what is going on in the company);
- Show direction;
- Create results;
- Demonstrate to others how to reach a goal; AND
- Achieve progress that benefits others, not just themselves.

A leader is someone who...

- Motivates;
- Empowers;
- Builds confidence;
- Listens / Cares; and
- Acts as a role model.

Effective leading begins within a person. Anyone can be a leader however to be an effective leader you need to have many skills. Each person defines for themselves what makes an effective leader.

Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman in their book **In Search of Excellence**, talked about effective leaders as having a bias for action, getting close to the customer, productivity through people, and being value driven. These four topics are important to create effective leadership in a business. Leaders must aim for a positive outcome in actions taken by a company. This means to have a strong desire to make things happen. Jean Luke Picard on Star Trek says to his ship mates, "Make it so!"



Rudolph Giuliani, the former mayor of New York city in his book **Leadership**, states that there are three outstanding attributes to effective leadership:

- Everyone is accountable, all of the time.
- Surround yourself with great people.
- One should always organize around a purpose (having vision).

In my Leadership Training Programs, I have often stated that, “A good leader does not have to have all the answers they just have to empower others to come up with the answers.” Many people see leadership as “leading someone else”. In actuality effective leadership begins within ourselves. If you know who you are and what you are trying to accomplish, then you need to be able to express that vision to others in a way that they are driven to move toward those goals as well. A key factor in leadership is this kind of empowerment. An effective leader is one who empowers the people around them to be the best they can be toward a common purpose.

Effective leaders need to be versatile and adaptive to their surroundings. As situations and people change, the leader must change the way he/she leads to get the best results. **Situational Leadership** by Kenneth Blanchard and Paul Hersey describes a method whereby the leader can change how they lead depending on the individual personalities of the people around them. This model allows you to analyze the needs of the situation you are in and then use the appropriate leadership style to match the needs. Depending on employees competencies in their task areas and level of commitment to their tasks, your leadership style should vary from one person to another. You may lead the same person one way sometimes and another way at other times. See: http://www.12manage.com/methods_blanchard_situational_leadership.html

In order to lead, someone has to follow. Effective leaders are about empowerment and find ways to “help you to help yourself”. These leadership skills can be taught and learned. And Peer Mentor.net provides continuous post-training e-support.

Peruse Peer Mentor.net www.peermentor.net to see a list of available resources and support programs; and then, visit our resource section for a more extensive list of international resources and mentor, coach and leadership training programs.

