

Trend Watch

What Makes a Good Leader?

The importance of effective leadership is not only to make a difference in the results of an organization, but to make a difference in the satisfaction levels of the people working within the organization. It has been said that some people are born with the right qualities and some develop them. Either way, we all eventually find ourselves in a leadership position. We all have an image of a good leader. The challenge is actually living in accordance with those standards.

"I used to think that leaders were these awesome, untouchable people," says Roselyn Courtney an expert in leadership and former exec at several *Fortune* 500 companies including Kraft, the New York Times and Citigroup. "Now I realize that the ones who are the most successful are down-to-earth and approachable. They are real people who have vulnerabilities and disappointments, and it's the way they deal with them and learn from them that makes them successful."

Most successful leaders are accessible, encourage candid dialog and show respect for employees and customers.

Here are some tips on being a successful leader:

- ***Have a vision.*** Effective leaders and their organizations have an agenda. A vision. A vision is a direction—an attractive and attainable picture of the future. As a leader, if you don't know where you are going, you are irrelevant to you followers. With a vision you can inspire and lift individuals and groups to new heights—an important function of any leader. The visionary process is made up of fundamentally three steps: discovering the vision, disseminating the vision and finally, driving the vision forward.
- ***Seize opportunity.*** Look for experiences that are new and different. Develop relationships with people who are different from the people you ordinarily have relationships with, especially those that come from different backgrounds and age groups. See movies and plays, read books and visit museums. These will broaden your outlook and develop a deeper well from which to draw from. We must learn to observe closely and accurately. Above all, Bennis reminds us to stay comfortable with "not knowing ... but finding out."
- ***Learn to delegate.*** Only do what can't be done by someone else.
- ***Reward results!***
- ***Communication is key.*** Be accessible to everyone in the organization. Companies need to realize that the old model of the leaders sitting on top of the pyramid and the managers executing orders does not work in today's environment. The person at the top cannot be the only leader. There have to be various people within the company acting in this role. There are many companies stuck in a rut where the managers are waiting to be told what to do. That doesn't work.
- ***Be proactive.*** Promote continuous exploration of yourself and other leaders within the organization. Be accountable for what you do. If there is an issue in the company, don't say you didn't know anything about it. Look at the organization and constantly ask what can be improved.