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FOLLOW THE LEADER

by Brooke Mott

What is a leader? Is it the person in charge? The person who controls what goes on and manages the people? Is it the person who belts out orders and gives deadlines? Well, yes and no; a leader may be the person in charge, gives deadlines or manages people, but there are ways to be a successful leader and not a tyrant. "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it," according to Dwight Eisenhower. But how do you make people want to do things your way, and what makes a good leader?

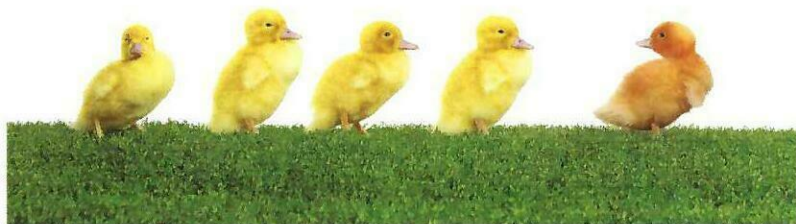
Even as a child, being a leader is important. For example, I wanted to be the leader in the lunch line in kindergarten. The line leader was really just the person at the front of the line, but still, it made me feel important to be in the front. I liked knowing that the group might not get to the destination without me. In reality, the kids would have made it just fine to the lunchroom without me leading them there. But, would it have been the right way to get there? Probably not.

With me standing in the front of the line, they could mimic my behavior; hands to my sides, not talking, and

walking instead of running. Without me it could have been complete chaos, my classmates could have been running, yelling, and not been in a single file line! So yes - they could have gotten to the lunchroom, but I showed them the most efficient way - I led them. This example, being somewhat silly, follows the same lines as being a leader of your team or practice - you have to lead by example, be a role model for your staff. Obviously, you aren't leading a group of squirrely kindergartners to lunch; more importantly you are leading your team to your vision.

As a leader you should have a clear vision and be taking steps toward that vision. A successful leader should have a list of rules for themselves, similar to their expectations of their team. The list varies by leader, but in my opinion all successful leaders should possess the following traits in order to have people to lead. It is hard to be a leader of no one, and not much gets done if you have to do it alone!

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HONESTY

No one wants to follow a leader who is deceiving them. As the old saying goes, "Honesty is the best policy." If you are manipulating and lying to your team about progress, or what is expected of them, your team is going to slowly leave you behind. People feel respected when they know what they are being told is the truth. Does the truth always have to be good? No, some truths are not. Being deceptive about issues only makes those issues more complicated. With that being said, if a truth could cause complete panic and breakdown of your team; you, as the leader, need to find the appropriate way to discuss those issues. Believe me, there is nothing wrong with evaluating the situation and your team before dropping a bomb on them.

COMPETENCY

Know something about what you are leading or managing. If you do not know what you are doing, or about the product you are working with, how do you expect your team to know? Do some research and ask questions of people who have done it before. Educating yourself on things you don't know or understand only makes you a better leader. If you are knowledgeable, that is great, but be open-minded to what your team thinks, ask them questions and get them involved with the decisions.

LISTEN

If you are going to ask what your team thinks, listen to them. It does not matter if you agree with everything they say. By simply listening to people, you - make them feel important. People who feel like they have played a role in decision making are more interested in completing tasks and duties. Brainstorming techniques are great for this reason because you have to listen to other people's ideas. Getting feedback from everyone not only gives a plethora of ideas, but also gets your team working together. There is no "I" in team, and if your team is only working as individuals - not much is going to get done.

DEDICATION

If you are not dedicated or passionate about what you are doing, you are doing the wrong thing. Who wants to work for or follow someone who does not care about the idea or project? No one does. You should not expect

your team to care about, or be inspired by, something that does not interest you. If no one is interested, you can fully expect failure. Your team may not initially have an interest in your idea or project. But if you commit yourself to it, get creative, set goals, and make the project sound fantastic; people will want to be a part of it. People thrive at being a part of greatness. If everyone is excited about it and finds something about the project that clicks with them then the project's ultimate success or failure will not really matter, because the project itself becomes a part of you and, overall, a success.

HUMILITY

Give credit where credit is due. As I said, there is no "I" in team. Without your team, you probably will not be as successful. Let your team know how much you appreciate them. People like to know they are doing well, and they like to know where they stand as an employee. If you are not giving your team or your employees recognition, their thoughts of you will not be positive. There is nothing worse than being the employee who worked above and beyond for their boss's project and did not get credit, not even a thank you. You would be surprised how far a thank you or a please can take you. Revert back to manners 101 that your mother taught you.

DELEGATE

You are not a successful leader if you cannot delegate duties to your team. In fact, what is the point of having a team if you are going to do all the work? Efficiently delegating is not spouting orders randomly. In a team everyone plays a role and everyone is "in charge" of certain tasks. This particular trait itself can be a struggle for some because of the idea, "I want it done my way." Well that is fine and dandy, except there might be a better way. George S. Patton once said, "Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results." Everyone has their own system of doing things. It doesn't mean they are doing it wrong, it is just a system for that person to get the job done right and more efficiently under their terms. You are the leader, so tell them what to do and when to have it completed, but let them be somewhat creative with how they are doing it, that is not to say that they don't have to follow certain guidelines.

ASSERTIVENESS

This goes right along with delegating. Be assertive, set rules and guidelines as to how you want the tasks completed. There has to be boundaries and it is your job to make sure the team is staying within those boundaries. It is not teamwork if people within your team are doing whatever they want, this can lead to the breakdown of your team. It is important to address these issues right away. Those team members who are disrupting the flow are not going to fix themselves. Take control of the situation and resolve it before you lose control of your whole team.

SENSE OF HUMOR

Who likes to be around someone who can't laugh? Especially at their own mistakes? Frankly, if you are expecting no mistakes to be made from time to time, you must be leading robots. People make mistakes, that is what makes them human. Plan on a mistake, especially in the beginning. Does that mean you should not expect your team's very best effort? No, not all. Expect perfection, expect your team to give 110% to any project. However, if the mistake does not make you completely shut down your project or lose your job; correct it, laugh about it, and move on.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Why would you ask your team member to do a task you would never do? I would not ask them to. I do not expect my team to do anything that I either haven't already done myself, or wouldn't do myself, and neither should you. To quote Robert Half, "Delegating work works, provided the one delegating works, too." People feel more confident and comfortable with leaders who work right with them and do what they do. For example, you work in an office and it needs vacuumed nightly, and that is one of the responsibilities of your employees. Now say that the employee responsible for doing that task is out sick and everyone else has already done their turn for the week. Yes, you could have one of the other employees vacuum, but what is wrong with you taking your turn? You are showing your employees that you are willing to help out and jump in if necessary. People notice that, appreciate it, and are often more willing to complete tasks when asked, when they know the person on top will do it too.

These are just some of the traits I use when I lead my team members. I have extremely high expectations of myself, as well as those on my team. But, my expectations are realistic due to the systems I have in place so that everyone knows what is expected of them. In a sense, I have set them up to succeed.

Now, let's go back to the beginning when I talked about a vision. A vision is important and to be a successful leader. You should have a vision for yourself, as well as a vision for your project, company, or relationship. It does not have to be a long drawn out idea, it can just be your expectations of how you want your idea to work and what you would like the end result to be. Many companies have a vision statement, usually stating how they want their company to be perceived. So your vision should probably be how you want people to see you as a leader.

Being a leader is not easy, mainly because you have to lead people. People are challenging to lead because each team member is an individual. They each possess different qualities and different challenges that have to be met. So in order to best converge each individual's qualities; to have your team work well together, you need to know each and every one of your team members. I don't mean you have to know their favorite TV show necessarily, but you do need to know how they react to certain situations. Do they become easily frustrated, can they multi-task, do they struggle with big groups of people, are they shy? If you have a person who gets easily stressed out over multiple tasks, why are you giving them multiple tasks simultaneously?

A good leader realizes the strengths and weaknesses of the team and works with them so the weaknesses are minimized and the strengths are maximized. Everyone has some talent to give, find that talent, use it, and appreciate it. You are only as good as your team. If you are not leading properly, your team will not follow properly and that only leads to chaos and loss of control. .. Kindergartners yelling and running down the hall to the lunchroom.

Not every leader is a success. Leadership really isn't something you can read about, and then just run out and do. Leadership is usually in a person's personality. If you are naturally a leader, it is natural to educate yourself on being the best leader you can be. If you are struggling with your team and finding it hard to get your team to share your vision, it does not mean that you should not be a leader, it just means you may need to change the way you are leading.

Not everyone is a leader, some people are better at being the team member behind the leader. There is nothing wrong with being that person, and those team members should be encouraged to be leaders in their own way. Peter F. Drucker said, "Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things." Teach your team to all be leaders in their own way... but always following you, the line leader.

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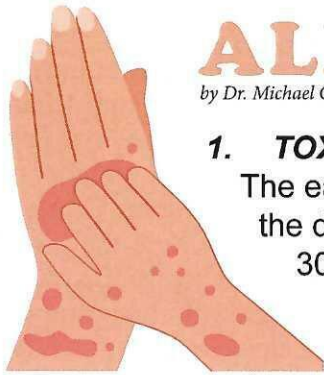
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ALLERGIES IN THE OFFICE

by Dr. Michael Curtis²

1. **TOXIC REACTION::**

The earliest signs of toxicity are anxiety, nervousness and increased excitability. In the dental environment such symptoms are very easy to miss. Watch for changes 30 minutes after injection, if your anesthetic contains epinephrine; 10 minutes if not. Toxicity can be fatal. Only 2 carpules of Carbocaine are toxic for the typical 4-year-old. Seniors over age 65 have half the liver function compared to age 30! Do you know how to treat toxicity?

2. **LATEX ALLERGY::**

Nearly 25% of health-care workers and 2% of the general population are now allergic to latex. Most carpules of anesthesia no longer use latex stoppers. However you can introduce latex allergen if you flick or bend the needle with gloved hands. Since latex dust can linger in the air, schedule latex sensitive patients first thing in the morning.

3. **SYNCOPE::**

Nausea, a cold sweat and/or fainting are characteristic of a vaso-vagal reaction (syncope). While this is not an IgE-mediated reaction, patients commonly lump frightening experiences into the general term "allergy."

4. **PSYCHOGENIC SKIN REACTIONS::**

Does your patient give a history of rash, flushing, blotching or hives following anesthesia? This may sound like an allergic reaction. However, such symptoms are also common reactions to stress. They may have been anxiety related.

5. **ILLNESS & DRUGS::**

Many patients have undiagnosed illnesses that may have caused a negative response in the chair. Examples might include unidentified diabetes, liver disease, hormone disorders, unrealized cancer or H.B.P. Interactions with over-the-counter meds, street drugs or herbal supplements can also cause negative reactions. Do you know which to worry about?

6. **PARESTHESIA::**

Prolonged anesthesia of 24-48 hours is not uncommon following mandibular blocks and be related as a "bad reaction." If numbness does not resolve, do you know exactly what to do? Should you prescribe antibiotics or steroids? What regimen? How must you mark the extent of numbness and track it over time? Is parasthesia more common with Septocaine?