

## Be a Great Leader

Picture an unproductive workplace, staffed by unmotivated employees. People are standing around, some are trying to look busy, but nothing ever seems to get accomplished. The team leader is frustrated because things just don't happen the way they're supposed to. Even in busy workplaces, goals are never fully reached despite the hustle and the bustle. If this scenario describes your workplace, maybe it's time to do something about it.

Many people are content just to stand around listening for orders. It isn't unusual for an entire staff to become complacent and adopt a follow-the-leader mentality. But you're different. Somewhere inside of you is the desire to make things happen, and you dream of being the head, not the tail. You could be the born leader that your company needs to succeed.

Some people believe that great leaders are born, not made. Although it may be true that many are born with natural leadership talents, these qualities will never be fully developed without practice, drive, enthusiasm and experience. Good leaders are continually working and studying to improve their skills, and possess a natural commitment to constantly improving both professional and personal endeavors.

A leader is defined as 'one who influences others to accomplish a goal or objective'. This person contributes to the organization and cohesion of a group.

Contrary to what most people believe, leadership is not about power. Good leaders do not harass people or drive them by inflicting fear. Rather, they encourage others to meet the goals and objectives of the organization. Effective leadership entails putting everyone on the same page and helping him or her see the big picture of the organization.

There is a big difference between being a leader, and being a boss.

The first step to being an effective leader is encouraging others to follow your lead. How is this accomplished? People follow others when they see a clear sense of purpose. Your team will only follow you if they see that you know where you are going, and have a sensible plan to meet your goals. Think of the bumper sticker that read "Don't follow me, I'm lost too." The same logic holds true for leadership. If you do not know where you're headed, how can you expect others to follow?

You must understand the vision of your organization. Have a clear sense of hierarchy; know whom the bosses are, and whom each person can go to for guidance. By displaying a clear understanding of the organization's goals and objectives, and how the organization operates, you will be able to prove to others that you are a confident leader.

Being a great leader is not about what you make others do. It's about who you are, what you know, and what you do. You are a reflection of what your team strives to be.

Studies have shown that another basis of good leadership is the trust and confidence that your team has in you. If they respect you, they will go through hell or high water for you and for the organization. Trust and confidence are built on the clear communication, high ethics and trustworthiness that you display on a day-to-day basis.

The way you deal with your team, and the relationships you build, will lay the foundation for the strength of your group. The stronger your relationship, the more trust they will have in your capabilities. Once you have earned their confidence, you are able to communicate goals and objectives to your team.

Communication is a very important key to good leadership. Without consistently clear communication you cannot succeed as a leader. The knowledge and technical expertise that you possess must be clearly imparted to other people.

Sound judgment is also vital for good leadership. You must be able to assess situations, weigh the pros and cons of any decision, and actively seek out a solution to any problem. Your team will begin to rely on your good judgment; so good decision-making is vital to the success of your organization.

Leaders are not expected to be heroes. Trust your team to fulfill tasks and make their own decisions. You should not claim to know everything, and you should not expect others to rely upon your skills alone.

Recognizing and taking advantage of the skills and talents of your group is the only way that you will be able to succeed as one cohesive unit.

Being a great leader takes a good deal of work and time, and is not learned overnight. Remember that it is not about just you. Great leaders take every opportunity to involve the people around them.

If you feel that you have the drive and desire to be a great leader, and to make a real difference in your organization, then go ahead and make the change. In other words, take the lead.