

The Essence of True leadership

(Be a Leader and not a Boss)

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*The boss drives his men,
The leader inspires them.*

*The boss depends on authority,
The leader on goodwill.*

*The boss evokes fear,
The leader radiates love.*

*The boss says "I",
The leader says we.*

*The boss shows who is wrong,
The leader shows what is wrong.*

*The boss knows how it is done,
The leader knows how it is to be done.*

*The boss abuses men,
The leader uses men.*

*The boss demands respect,
The leader commands respect.*

*The boss accuses a man
The leader rescues a man*

*The boss centralizes power
The leader decentralizes power*

*The boss demarcates the duties
The leader democratizes the duties*

Generally, the technical leaders have to cross five milestones before they can effectively do justice to the leadership role demands of their position. They must be magnanimous and humble to hear the bearings of a commoner, the bountiful sympathies of a true friend, the dreamy determination of a visionary, the generous empathy of a missionary, and the resolute control of a commander in the battlefield. They are considered to be vital points, as each lower milestone facilitates and strengthens the journey to the next higher one.

Basically, when a manager shows his **humbleness** in liberal display he becomes accessible and approachable. As a result he earns friends. Secondly, when he establishes the **trust level** that exists between true friends, then he finds ready buyers for his vision. Next, when he sells a **sound vision** for his unit, department, team, project or organization, it ensures for him and his followers something to be always excited about and enthusiastically look forward to. Fourth, when a manager moderates the pursuit of his vision with the **characteristic empathy**, his personal power to influence his subordinates increases. Finally, as a leader of his men, more by **personal power** than by positional power, a manager generates synergies and optimizes the collective energies of himself and his team members.

The Commoner

According to Devashis Rath, the leaders, by and large, by design or default, place themselves on a **high pedestal, thus distancing themselves from average employees**. They build an aura around them, stay bound to their office premises and senior management, and indulge in tall talk and self-praise. Thus, subordinates either get overawed, at one extreme, or get bored with such personalities. **A gap opens up and a distance is created between the leader and the led**. Having always got the message that their boss is an all-knowing entity, subordinates fail to align themselves with their managers. They keep sweeping personal mistakes under the carpet and feel fearful about revealing their ignorance. Managers fail to gain their trust, confidence and goodwill, **when they keep beating their own trumpet about the superiority of their chair**, the richness of their experience or the relative profoundness of their knowledge.

However, true leaders of men make no bones about their own mistakes and weaknesses. By doing so, they send a message that they too are human.

A CEO has to maintain a low profile while dealing with his subordinates. **He should be realistic in his human relations**. His subordinates testify that their CEO never hesitates to admit his ignorance, when he really does not know about a piece of business information, being shared by persons reporting to him. By behaving thus, A CEO instantaneously sends two powerful messages. **First, ignorance is not a crime; second, learning and sharing is cherished.**

When leaders can reserve their ego and pride to fight for issues, rather than to reinforce their chair and position, they will be seen as approachable by others. Humble managers, who do not carry themselves around as a model of perfection, which anyway is a human impossibility, have subordinates who dare and care to reveal personal mistakes and deficiencies to them. With such managers, subordinates do not hesitate to question and clarify doubts and learn and share ideas, thoughts and apprehensions on work-related issues. As a result, there is a free flow of new learning, sharing of critical experiences, and a high degree of spontaneous help and cooperation, between the leader and the led. The intelligent leaders have to use their humbleness, as a curtain raiser to befriend their subordinates. Take the case of the two most famous information technology tycoons of India. **Both Azim Premji and N R Narayana Murthy** has become international benchmarks in humility, simplicity and proper use of one's wealth, status and achievements.

In his latest book, 'A touch of Greatness,' author R M Lala, recounts how Premji had come to meet him at Mumbai House, the Tata headquarters in Mumbai. In spite of having a prior appointment, Premji had queued up downstairs, along with the general public. If one of the richest men of the world can behave like a commoner, then we too can take a leaf out of his book and develop humility, in spite of our position, power, status and remuneration.

A True Friend

Kahlis Gibran (1883-1931), the Lebanese-American philosopher, has exalted the value of friendship in a one liner: "Your friend is your needs answered." **When needs are answered, life is made, man is motivated and full of energy and vigour**. Each one of us brings to our work, not only our will to work, but also a bag of expectations that we wish to be fulfilled by our job: expectations not only in terms of financial rewards, but also in terms of self-esteem, pride, dignity and social status. **By establishing his credentials as a commoner, a manager conveys the message that he is genuine, approachable and dependable**. These are qualities that attract friends. However, smart managers do not wait for friends to come. They go a step further and leverage such qualities and put their best foot

forward to strike base with their subordinates and befriend them. By this, they get to know their subordinates' innermost needs and expectations.

The legendary Russi Mody of Tata Steel in India, was a phenomenal success with thousands of his company's employees. Revealing the secret of his success at several forums, Russi always says that, he firmly believed and followed the two commandments of the Bible: **"Do unto others as you would, have them, do unto you and love thy neighbour as thyself."** Managers need nothing more than, this secret to develop true friendship with their subordinates.

The Visionary

A leader without a vision is like a body without a soul. To have a vision essentially means, to draw such a positive and attractive picture of a future state of affairs, that it will inspire others to achieve that state. Nothing prevents anyone from having a vision. Managers, irrespective of their work or position in the organizational hierarchy, need to have a vision, so that **subordinates get lifted from the monotony of day-to-day work and find a meaning in their jobs.** Subordinates need to have something to think of, talk about and aspire for. Even a vision like - "my team defends my organization's interest by being the most productive one" or "my department is committed to bringing down the throughput time of all our activities to the minimum" - is good enough for a manager to communicate and share with his subordinates. Yet, though all visionary people have a dream, which is apparent, very few are able to intricately weave into their dream the power of undaunted determination. For instance, Thomas Jefferson's vision of a society, **where men were free to assert their inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, spurred the French Revolution.** Henry Ford dreamed of putting America on wheels and pursued it to its logical conclusion - **the Ford Motor Company.**

Another case in point is that of B Muthuraman, the Managing Director of Tata Steel in India. He believes in **motivating people through his dreams for the company.** It is said that Muthuraman's excitement comes from exciting others. This determination of constantly keeping others excited about one's dream makes all **the difference between leading a team and managing a team.** So is the case, with the late H T Parekh, the financial and banking wizard of India. While studying at the London School of Economics, Parekh had observed how so many English people owned their own house. **He dreamed that one day Indians should also enjoy similar opportunities.** Afterwards, at the age of 68, when he was stepping down as Chairman of **ICICI, Parekh started the Housing Development Finance Corporation.** Normally, at that age any other person would have been contented to lead a happy retired life. Indeed, it is a unique example of weaving vision and determination into one.

However, leaving aside the examples of such towering icons, the anecdotal evidence is that many leaders - even if endowed with a lofty vision and steely determination - get nowhere near their dreams for years on end. Why does this happen? **The answer is simple:** because such managers try to impose their vision on their subordinates, instead of making efforts to sell it. Here comes, **the need to be a true friend to subordinates.** Genuine friendship cements a bone of trustworthiness, dependability and, above all, credibility between two parties. Hence, when subordinates associate such attributes with their managers, they readily buy into his vision for the department, unit, group or team. This is called the essence of true leadership.

Reference :

[1] The Path way to Managerial leadership - Devashis Rath. Indian Management. All India Management Association, My 2003,42, No 5

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