

## PCA article series

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### Effective leadership

**While leadership is easy to explain, it's not so easy to practice.**

Leadership is about behaviour first, skills second.

Good leaders are followed chiefly because people trust and respect them. Leadership differs to management, which relies more on planning, organisational and communications skills.

Leadership relies on management skills too, but more on qualities such as integrity, honesty, humility, courage, commitment, sincerity, passion, confidence, optimism, wisdom, determination, compassion and sensitivity.

Some people are born more naturally to leadership than others. Most people don't seek to be a leader. Those who want to be a leader can develop leadership ability.

Today ethical leadership is more important than ever. The world is more transparent and connected than it has ever been. The actions and philosophies of organisations are scrutinised by the media and the general public as never before. This coincides with massively increased awareness and interest of corporate responsibility and related concepts, such as Fair Trade, sustainability, social and community responsibility. The modern leader needs to understand and aspire to leading people and achieving greatness in all these areas.

Effective leadership needs to be built on a platform of solid philosophy. These are typical leadership principles quoted by respected business leader Jack Welch.

1. There is only one way - the straight way. It sets the tone of the organisation.
2. Be open to the best of what everyone, everywhere, has to offer; transfer learning across your organisation.
3. Get the right people in the right jobs - it is more important than developing a strategy.
4. An informal atmosphere is a competitive advantage.
5. Make sure everybody counts and everybody knows they count.
6. Legitimate self-confidence is a winner - the true test of self-confidence is the courage to be open.
7. Business has to be fun - celebrations energise and organisation.
8. Never underestimate the other guy.
9. Understand where real value is added and put your best people there.
10. Know when to meddle and when to let go - this is pure instinct.

As a leader, your main priority is to get the job done, whatever the job is, and you must know yourself - your strengths and weaknesses.

Build teams around you and plan carefully (with your team where appropriate). Look after people and ensure good communications and relationships. Select good people and develop them via training and experience, agree objectives and responsibilities that will interest and stretch them, and always support them while they strive to improve and take on extra tasks. Follow the rules about delegation closely - this process is crucial. Ensure that your managers apply the same principles.

Communication is critical. Listen, consult, involve, explain why as well as what needs to be done.

Whatever leadership style you adopt - your example is paramount - the way you work and conduct yourself will be the most you can possibly expect from your people. If you set low standards you are to blame for low standards in your people.

"... Praise loudly, blame softly." (Catherine the Great). Follow this maxim.

If you seek one single most important behaviour that will rapidly earn you respect and trust among your people, this is it:

Always give your people the credit for your achievements and successes. You must however take the blame and accept responsibility for any failings or mistakes that your people make. Never, publicly blame another person for a failing. Their failing is your responsibility - true leadership offers is no hiding place for a true leader.

Accentuate the positive. Express things in terms of what should be done, not what shouldn't be done. If you tell a 5 year old not to stick peas up their nose during dinner – what's likely to happen?

Have faith in people to do great things - given space and air and time, everyone can achieve more than they hope for. Provide people with relevant interesting opportunities, with proper measures and rewards and they will more than repay your faith.

Take difficult decisions bravely, and be truthful and sensitive when you implement them.

Constantly seek to learn from the people around you - they will teach you more about yourself than anything else. They will also tell you 90% of what you need to know to achieve your business goals.

Embrace change, but not for change's sake. Begin to plan your own succession as soon as you take up your new post. Only make promises you can guarantee to deliver.

## **Great leadership and inspirational quotes**

"I not only use all the brains I have, but all I can borrow." (Woodrow Wilson)

"I keep six honest serving-men, They taught me all I knew; Their names are What and Why and When, And How and Where and Who." (Rudyard Kipling, from 'Just So Stories', 1902.)

"Experto Credite." ("Trust one who has proved it." Virgil, 2,000 years ago.