

What makes a Good Leader?

In an interview, the former England Cricket coach, Andy Flower, was asked what credentials he was looking for in the next England cricket captain. Flower spoke of the leader having to have good self-awareness, good empathy with other people, a sense of knowing what is going on around him and someone who is highly respected. An interesting point made by the coach was that another great strength of the leader was that of 'not showing your feelings'.

Some very interesting attributes from a sporting perspective but in my view, the question of 'what makes a good leader' is very contextual. Very often we get mixed up with the terms leader and manager. In a business sense they are quite different and to keep it simple, the leader is the person who does the vision and the 'people bit' whereas the manager does the numbers and the 'paper stuff'.

What do we mean by vision and people? The good leader is someone who, through collaboration with colleagues, can create a clear and attainable vision and has the skills and abilities to motivate and inspire their team to achieve the desired end state – to take them voluntarily on the journey. Delivery of the vision is achieved through management processes and including the setting of achievable goals at all levels within an organisation.

In business, the trend in today's fast-moving and globalised domain for achieving results is predominantly carried out by a leader who has all the attributes contained in a 'transformational leadership' model. That is not to say that other leadership styles don't work, as there are many organisations in society where other styles are more suited.

The transformational leader has personal skills sets which I believe can be taught or achieved through work based-learning, but many start their working lives by having the key attributes in place as a result of their upbringing and through developing their personal values and standards as they move through the learning phases of life.

For example, many great leaders that I have worked with have had an abundance of charisma and when combined with a set of very strong ethical and personal values, the decision-making and problem-solving outcomes have been key contributions towards their personal and organisational successes. The clarity of the vision and how this is communicated within the organisation by the leader is fundamental to achieving 'buy-in' from the management team and where appropriate, the strong leaders have demonstrated an ability to adapt their styles in order meet the needs of a changing situation at the strategic level.

A good leader has to be inspirational and lead by example. It's all about how you inspire your management teams and those individuals within each team as it is they who are instrumental in taking forward and subsequently

achieving your organisational goals. A good leader has to be trustworthy and very committed to providing the right processes for the development of the people within the organisation and for improving the organisation in a way that makes it a better and at times more fun place to work.

A good leader isn't therefore necessarily born with all the skills and attributes mentioned above, but through on-the-job learning and practising, combined with hard work and concentrated effort, a leader can be developed, coached and mentored. Remember, Andrew Strauss, the former England cricket captain, didn't achieve success straight away, but at his peak, he delivered the last back-to-back Ashes series victories through what was arguably his excellent leadership.

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