

Contagious LEADERSHIP

by Monica Wofford, MBA, CSP



67 WAYS TO BE A CONTAGIOUS LEADER

What you do as a leader is extremely important. Why? Because you are contagious and everything you do rubs off on those you lead. You serve as the model for how they are supposed to behave. In fact, leaders have an attitude that others catch; they have skills that others want to catch and they are so often unaware of all the people watching their every move. They watch what you do, even more so than what you say and it happens without much awareness, almost by accident if you will.

There are so many skills and attributes that we practice in order to be better leaders. We even work on a better game face. But, if we practice so much then why does what we do so often gives others messages and permissions that were well... accidental. The thing to have that is the most critical for effective leadership is not communication, not coaching skills, not even awareness, but rather it is FOLLOWERS and since that is the case, let's keep a focus on those folks and make sure that as leaders we are doing what makes the most difference to them and that we are doing it on purpose.

Just think, what would you be if you had a leadership title and had no followers? Uh... alone. You would be incredibly well titled, maybe well skilled and standing by yourself. Not exactly how we picture a leader. Instead, be a leader of followers on purpose who leads them to achieve a purpose with purpose. By the way, those are the ones who typically have employees who complain less, stay longer and produce more. That is just what any number of these steps will help you to achieve.

1. Call employees "those that work WITH you".
2. Stop calling employees "my employees", or "my people"
3. Create and write down measurable goals together
4. Make sure that the goals you create are subject to change at your approval.
5. Celebrate the achievement of any goal.
6. Hire the right people for the right jobs
7. Encourage mentors at all levels.
8. Provide value to employees before you need value from them.
9. Be genuinely interested in the needs of employees.
10. Have sincere desire, authenticity, and integrity in what you do or you will fail.
11. Know that all your endeavors will not be easy and will not happen as you planned.
12. Recognize that not all followers will agree or "be on board" with what you want.
13. Allow for the opinions of others in all matters.
14. Find the leaders on the team you lead that have no title.
15. Infuse a need to grow by teaching, rather than by giving the answers.
16. Allow for errors and mistakes at many levels.
17. Inspire persistence even after the first, second, and third rejection of an attempt.
18. Keep a cool head even in times when the world is falling apart.
19. Communicate assertively, but not in an overpowering fashion.
20. Avoid sucking things in until they have become dangerously like a volcano of explosive readiness.
21. Realize that "Home is not where you go when you are tired of being nice to people!"
22. Remember that your body continues talking long after your lips stop moving.
23. Adhere to the ratio that you have two ears to one mouth and use them proportionately.
24. Ask more questions than you give advice.
25. Seek input from those closer to the problem than you are.
26. Listen to the grapevine often and regularly.
27. Build rapport, or respect, with everyone.
28. Fuss over others' events, achievements, families and friends.
29. Be entertaining, humorous, or at the very least, fun to be around.
30. Engage serious behavior on serious subjects when warranted.
31. Avoid assuming that your communication style or personality type is the one everyone else has.
32. Adhere to the principle that "communication is not what was said, but what was received."
33. Inspire creativity.
34. Require yourself often to think about something from a different angle or perspective.
35. Ask people you lead to describe a problem using something from nature.
36. Replace nature with a canned good, a color a piece of furniture, an animal or anything.
37. Promote impromptu brainstorming sessions with the leader present.
38. Engage in active learning every day.
39. Share your expectations clearly, consistently, and early on.
40. Have a LIFE!
41. Encourage all those you lead to have or get a LIFE!
42. Reinforce the idea that work and life must be balanced or both will be out of whack.
43. Give yourself permission to leave things undone.
44. Let go of needing to be perfect.
45. Let go of the need for others to be perfect.
46. Relinquish the need to always have others like you.
47. Become clear and comfortable with the fact that leadership does not mean "Be the favorite one on the playground."
48. Know that sometimes peers will become employees when you are promoted.
49. Show gratitude to those who can transition from peers to employees.
50. Learn the different types of recognition: public, private, tangible and intangible.
51. Share kudos in public, discipline in private.
52. Be spontaneous and scheduled with rewards.
53. Spend most of your time with those who are performing the way you have asked them to.
54. Observe what people do for others to learn what they would like to have done for them.
55. Remember that money does not motivate for the long term and only becomes expected.
56. Grow courage for the tough conversations.
57. Maintain clarity around the fact that attitudes are not taught or changed without the owner's consent.
58. Criticize someone's attitude at your own risk.
59. Know that your crisis does not constitute urgent action from others if you messed up.
60. Micro-manage only those who need and only until they prove they do not.
61. Be kind to new hires particularly if you used to do what they are being taught to do.
62. Remind yourself that if you have done it for 20 years, you no longer remember the steps.
63. Believe that people will do what they get paid attention for.
64. Free up for new opportunities those who are unable to perform at the established standard.
65. Trust that managers are often promoted for no good reason.
66. Recognize that managers have to have a title, leaders do not.
67. Exhibit leadership traits as a part of who you are, not what your title says.

About the Author

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