

Ace the leadership challenge

Adopt the key practices that will make you an effective leader

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LEADERSHIP is a key quality of top managers and necessary for sales profitability.

For many people in multinational, government and educational organisations, leadership is the most difficult quality to acquire, yet it is critical in times of uncertainty or economic unrest.

I recently worked with a group of team managers in a break-out session exercise in which we grouped the ages of the delegates into their respective generations; X, Y or baby boomer demographics.

I asked the groups to work in teams of four to define what they believed were the core differences between leaders and managers. After 20 minutes, each group stood up with a chosen leader from the four who represented the group's insights.

Invariably, each group had similar findings. However, the key learning point was how the Gen X, Gen Y or Boomer managers differ in their definitions and examples of management and leadership.

The elements of effective leadership are well documented by authors Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner in one of the consistently best-rated top 10 leadership books in the world, *The Leadership Challenge*.

In their research, they discovered five key practices which produced highly effective leaders:

1. Model the way

This is a set of principles expressing how people want to be treated and how goals can be achieved by leaders. In other words, leaders have to show people how to complete actions by demonstrating the "how to" methods.

2. Inspire a shared vision

Show what can be achieved through a passionate belief that people can and do make the difference.

3. Challenge the process

Driving innovation fuels creativity and making mistakes while learning from them to find better methods is critical to breaking through old paradigms or beliefs.

4. Enable others to act

Make the most of people in a team, showing trust, respect and helping others who are capable and valued.

5. Encourage the heart

Instill positive rewards, recognition and feedback by celebrating accomplishments of individuals and the team.

These five practices are supported by “how to” learning examples and competency methods, supported by thousands of case studies and research.

For example, I attended a few of the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) events held in Singapore last month and found them fantastic.

Having been at the Sydney Olympics in September 2000, I made a comparison of both events, the organisation of helpers and interactions with the paying public who were watching the variety of events.

Singapore took up the challenge to stage the YOG and cleared the bar with many positive comments by world leaders and the athletes. Besides hosting the Formula 1 night race, opening two new integrated resorts and constructing the Flyer, Singapore can now add another title that boosts its reputation as a world-class city: Olympic host.

In Dr Ken Blanchard’s best-selling book, *The One Minute Manager*, he describes a manager’s journey in a story. It doesn’t take long before the reader learns the simple, yet powerful truths to being a great leader.

As many of the athletes and attending public who participated in the YOG discovered, it is not always about winning medals or beating the competition that brings us our greatest joys.

Often the best wins are in working beside people who demonstrate effective management qualities and who lead us to make new improvements so that we have better-run countries, organisations, associations and schools.

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