

My Leadership Framework

By

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Introduction

My leadership framework captures the essence of who I am as a leader. It is my response to the following question:

“Imagine for a minute that you have to prepare a resume where you can’t highlight the college you attended, what degrees you hold, your work experience or the project achievements you have had up to this point. The only data you can put on your resume pertains to who you are as a leader and what you have demonstrated. How would the resume read?”

Purpose

Leadership is my calling. My purpose as a leader is to influence my constituency by providing vision, purpose, direction and motivation, while accomplishing my company’s goals, improving the organization and supporting people as they endeavor to reach their full potential.

Vision for my Leadership

My vision is to have satisfied customers and happy, engaged colleagues. Customers are satisfied when they get good services that meet or exceed their expectations. Colleagues are happy when they are empowered and have some control over their work and their careers, when they are engaged in meaningful work, are passionate about their work and are treated with respect. I am devoted to people and results.

Constituency

My constituency consists of my staff, customers and colleagues. Building solid, trusting relationships is the key to achieving success and leadership with my constituents.

I believe people want to succeed; my job is to create an environment where that can happen. When assigning projects, I shall balance my team’s needs to try new things and learn new skills commensurate with their individual development plan with our customer’s needs for the best services we can deliver. I’ll work to make my team a success. This sometimes requires leading, stretching or pushing.

My customers expect timely, accurate communications. They expect transparency in our relationship and the highest levels of customer service.

My colleagues expect a collaborative environment where their opinions are valued and their expertise honored. I'll give credit when credit is due.

Values

The foundation for my values is dedication to my faith, family, country and a strong work ethic. I believe in certain absolute truths that form the authority for directing my life, guiding my ethics and leading me to believe the mark of true greatness is measured by sacrificially serving others; in other words, practicing servant leadership.

Servant leadership does not mean abdicating your authority and allowing the inmates to run the asylum. Leadership is a process of influence. Anytime you seek to influence the thinking, behavior or development of people toward accomplishing a goal in their personal or professional lives you are taking on the role of a leader.

I fully support the colleagues entrusted to my care as they endeavor to reach their full potential. As their steward, I entirely expect that some of these colleagues may in fact climb the career ladder faster than I will and be more successful than I am in business. That is fine with me. My job is to help them recognize their potential and reach for their goals.

From each of my direct reports, I request that if they've ever learned anything at all from me in managing and developing people, that they in turn pay it forward and impart what they've learned to their future direct reports. After all, it's a fact of life for anyone in information systems that the only true lasting value we bring to the table is that which we do for others. Every system we touch and every computer program we design is destined for retirement before the project begins. Our work is temporal. Relationships are lasting. People, and how we touch their lives, are our legacy.

Personal integrity, moral courage, respect for people, humor, caring, self-development, stewardship and balance are relationship values I embrace and demonstrate as a leader.

Walk the Talk

Personal Integrity: I shall tell the truth, and I expect others to tell the truth. This includes bringing me bad news when it's fresh, when we can still act on it. Bad news is still good data. I don't like being surprised with information when it is within someone's power to let me know what's going on.

Moral Courage: I shall have the moral courage to make the tough decisions. If I can't figure out what the right thing to do is on my own, I'll ask for help. When I do make a decision on a sensitive matter, I'm willing to explain myself.

Humor: I shall keep my sense of humor. I shall keep a cheerful outlook, especially in challenging times and will be energetic.

Caring: People don't care about what you know until they know that you care. I shall actively seek input and advice. Give me honest counsel. Feedback is a gift. If I don't think to ask, give it to me anyway. I shall meet with my direct reports regularly to discuss things that concern them. My door is always open and I invite my colleagues to share their stories with me any time they have a need. If I hear of a colleague's need, I'll do everything I can to fill that need.

Self-development: None of us is perfect and I am aware of my own faults and weaknesses. When I make mistakes, I overcome them, learn from them and do not repeat them. I continually look for opportunities to develop others and myself. This includes taking courses, attending seminars and lectures or reading. I encourage my colleagues to do the same and will not request anything of them that I am not willing to do myself.

Stewardship: If I see someone do something or hear of a decision someone makes that may be perceived as ethically questionable, I shall ask about it. When someone sees me do something or observes behavior they're unsure of, ask me about it and I'll explain myself. I won't be offended. We will make ethical decisions consistent with my company's corporate values. The principles and habits of servant leadership will serve as my compass in directing my interaction with others.

Balance: I shall keep in mind that my colleagues have interests and obligations outside of work. To the extent that I can honor a healthy work/life balance and make these aspects of their life fit together well, I shall.

Vision for my Constituency

Let me share my vision for you:

Believe in yourself. Seek and accept responsibility as both a leader and follower. Practice personal accountability. Act as if our company's success depends on your actions alone.

Take responsibility for your actions and decisions just as I do. Try to be the best at everything you do. You won't always achieve your most ambitious goals, but you'll be far ahead of where you'd be if you plan for mediocrity.

We all make mistakes. Let's learn from our mistakes and not hide them.

I expect my team to work hard. Finish your projects on time. If you can't, let someone know as soon as you figure it out. Ask for help if you need it. Don't engage in heroics. Be a leader.

Communication is the key to smooth operations and to building trust. We must make our concerns known and share feedback throughout the organization. We shall work together to nurture an atmosphere of personal safety. We shall be honest and temperate. We shall not indulge in personal attacks.

Don't push my hot buttons. My hot buttons are behaviors I don't care for and will challenge when I see them. These behaviors include:

- If you lie or steal from the company or a customer, well just don't do it. It won't be pretty.
- Be on time for meetings
- Don't gossip or spread rumors
- Don't whine
- Don't just point out problems; propose solutions

Conclusion

Colin Powell, retired Secretary of State and Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, once said:
"Leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible."

As managers, we often handcuff ourselves in our belief about what we can accomplish within the confines of our organizational constructs. Hank McKinnell, former Chairman and CEO of Pfizer, Inc. says that each individual in an organization needs to "find a way to lead." As leaders, we can loosen the shackles of organizational constraint. We need to shed our preconceived notions and influence anyone within our company in a position to help us meet our envisioned organizational goals. We need to reach beyond the boundaries of organizational silos to make our company a better place for tomorrow and assure our place in history as an industry leading enterprise in the 21st century.

As leaders, we need to improve our effectiveness. Effective leaders articulate vivid, over-arching goals and values that we use to drive daily behaviors and choices among competing alternatives. Our visions and priorities need to be lean and compelling, not cluttered and buzzword-laden. Our decisions need to be crisp and clear, not tentative and ambiguous. They need to convey an unwavering firmness and consistency in our actions, aligned with the future picture they paint. The result: clarity of purpose, credibility of leadership and integrity in organization.

I am this kind of leader.