

Leadership

This is a summary of a speech made by Carmel

Leadership is essential for any organizations survival and growth in turbulent times.

Leadership and great leaders have always been with us from as far back as Pallas Athena, the warrior celebrated in the Patheon as goddess of wisdom, right up to people such as Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King and Emily Pankhurst. All these while being very different people from different cultures have certain commonalties. They all have charisma. They had the ability to arouse enthusiasm, inspire pride, faith and respect. They were able to recognize what is really important and articulate effectively a vision that inspires others, remember Martin Luther King, I have a dream..... a very powerful emotive statement, which we remember, energised others to action.

This ability to articulate and arouse enthusiasm for a shared vision is critical in a leader. They have a presence, which attracts others to follow and participate in a common cause. This is more than just charisma, but an infectious goal to help bring about change of the organization, community and country.

Leadership is a vital and dynamic function in organizations and good leadership is a critical factor for the success of the organization. However leadership is a complex issue made up of many parts. Leaders need energy, drive, commonsense, humor and courage, and are motivated by a sense of duty and responsibility.

Bill Norman in his book *The Ten Laws of Leadership* identifies ten aspects of leadership and I would like to share seven that I think are particularly important and relevant to me as I grapple with leading an organisation of 11,000 staff and a budget of a billion dollars.

Discipline

The first characteristic of leadership is discipline. “ Discipline is the basic set of tools we require to solve life’s problems” Without discipline we can solve nothing. Self-discipline is not a popular topic – superficial psychology has encouraged us to abhor restraint, abandon inhibition and indulge our natural impulses. But you do not get through study or child raising or managing the complexity of a large public organisation without persistence, determination and discipline.

Wisdom

Leaders have wisdom

Herbert Hoover said: “Wisdom consists not so much in knowing what to do in the ultimate as in knowing what to do next.”

The ethics of leadership is practical wisdom; it is about asking what one should do? This wisdom takes into account that human life extends beyond the material dimensions and into spiritual dimensions. This leads to the formation of inner character. Many decisions that are made as a leader draw on such inner orientation by weighing issues often that have moral implications that arise when making decisions.

Whereas knowledge can be memorized, wisdom must think things through. It thinks for itself, it feels for itself. Wisdom makes the best use of knowledge. It encourages discernment.

Decision Making

Another characteristic of leadership is the ability to make decisions.

A leader seizes the moment. Successful people tend to make decisions quickly and change them rarely, while unsuccessful people tend to make decisions slowly and change them often. That’s not completely true. Making a good decision, follows the same process as writing a good assignment. You clarify the question or issue, gather facts, take advice or read what others have said, you consider the risks – like will happen if I don’t hand this essay in – and look at how your decision will affect others and finally, ask yourself is this ethical or moral decision, or in essay terms, have you plagiarized. This also has a moral implications. Once the decision is made and the essay handed in, you move forward to the next challenge.

Friends

A leader develops friendships

Success depends on the support of others, No-one makes it alone. You know all the jokes. Behind every successful man there’s a supportive woman. If you think of any successful person or leader, there has been a support team behind them. You need friends and networks – it’s lonely without them. To grow friends it takes time and interest. Networking is lighter, quicker, its results ephemeral, but never the less it’s effective. From it you can attract new friends whose support you can rely on.

In addition to friendships a good leader fosters a team spirit, that recognizes the inherent dignity of every person. The team is committed to a common goal and feels that they have the ability and opportunity to contribute.

Courage

A leader has courage. A leader possesses and exhibits moral courage and has a capacity for ethical reflections.

Courage has many names, bravery, daring, heroism or nerve; in new management babble it's called 'risk taking'.

Vision

I must include vision as a leader, is particularly important.

All of you have dreams and real leaders have never lost the childlike ability to dream dreams. Where would the world be without Martin Luther King's dream? There is nothing that excites like a vision to accomplish something special. Like the dream that you have had of succeeding that have kept you going through all the bad days and the long nights. We all know how to create dreams. Remember, I'm sure you do, the power dreams create, the enthusiasm, the drive and how good you feel. Keep the dream going and that energy stays with you.

Humility

And lastly leaders have humility

There is a beautiful quotation of Isaac Newton's. "If I could see farther than others, it's because I stood on the shoulders of giants."

Humility is one the most important characteristics in the life of a leader. Leaders are here to serve others.

Think of Gandhi. Remember Paul Keating, the public considered him as arrogant, and lacking humility and they punished him for it. Ben Chifley, the steam engine driver from Bathurst, had humility and Australians loved him for it.

There are many qualities required to be a great leader, as I have outlined charisma, discipline, wisdom, the ability to make decisions, friends, humility, courage, and lastly, not least important, vision. It is not easy to be a leader and, however, we must not stand back.

This is not the time to hold back or to be held back, it's time to go for it, time to lead. Dare to be powerful, dare to be bold and accept the challenge to make a difference.