

LEADERSHIP



A talk delivered by
OPP Deputy Commissioner
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at the inaugural
United Way of Greater Simcoe County
Leadership Recognition Event
May 8th, 2008

- WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?
- WHAT MAKES A GREAT LEADER?
- ARE PEOPLE BORN LEADERS OR CAN LEADERSHIP BE TAUGHT?
- ARE THERE LEADERS IN THIS ROOM? *YOU BET THERE ARE.*

These are questions that I don't necessarily have text-book answers for. I have strong feelings on what I think leadership is all about – right or wrong – but I certainly don't profess to know it all. Maybe the ability to make an admission like that is part of LEADERSHIP??? Who knows?

I'd like to start off by thanking the United Way of Simcoe County first of all inviting me to be here today and a part of this important event and secondly for all of the wonderful work that is done across Simcoe County by your dedicated staff and volunteers, each and every day. It is a pleasure to be here. The United Way organization does so much for communities and one has to wonder "if United Way didn't do it, who would?"

You are here tonight because you have given a "leadership" gift to the United Way of Simcoe County. By making that choice you have demonstrated leadership on a grand scale in my view.

I've always been a student of leadership. From my days playing football in high school, as a member of a crew on a ship on the Great Lakes, as a member of service clubs and associations, right through my policing career until now.....I have been in awe of good leaders and disappointed by weak ones.

I wanted to know what made these folks tick and what I could learn from them in both positive and negative perspectives. Some people were better bad examples than they were good, but I learned from them all.

WHAT IS A LEADER?

Author Howard Gardner defines a leader as *“an individual who significantly affects the thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviours of a significant number of individuals.”*

One of the fathers of the United States of America, John Quincy Adams said *“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, to do more and to become more, you are a leader”*.

Think about that. Inspire. You inspire many through your contributions, either monetarily, or through the gifts of your talent, wisdom, creativity and/or energy.

And why do you do it - Because.....

A LEADER ALWAYS PUTS THE GOOD OF THE PEOPLE HE OR SHE SERVES AND THE GOOD OF THE PEOPLE WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION - BEFORE ANY PERSONAL NEEDS OR PERSONAL AGENDA.

Being a leader isn't about making yourself look good and ensuring your own needs are looked after....it's about meeting the needs of the people you serve and the people within your organization.

“Emotional Intelligence” – the capacity for effectively recognizing and managing our own emotions and those of others. It's important to not let your emotions or those of others interfere with relationships and decision-making. That doesn't mean we should ignore emotions or that as a leader you can't show emotion. It simply means “be aware” and understand them.

One of the greatest traits of good leaders is “knowing your people”. Understanding their emotions. This is a challenge in a large organization, but knowing their names, a bit about them, and “what makes them tick”, like interests, history, etc., really goes a long way in developing bonds.

Along with that, recognizing significant events in their lives, the wonderful and the tragic, knowing when to offer a shoulder to cry on, a sympathy card, a personal call or a pat on the back.

It sounds simple, but sometimes in our busy corporate lives, these little things and the importance of them, get forgotten.

People skills, the ability to talk and listen sincerely, to show empathy, to support others, to be honest and accessible. These are the skills that will make you or break you as a leader. People won't always remember how good your technical skills were, how well you ran a budget or wrote a report, or how well you could analyze data. But they WILL always remember how you treated them.

Sometimes leaders are liked, sometimes they're loved, sometimes leaders are feared or hated by some....sometimes they're all of the above. Some of these things are benefits – others are consequences.

But it's not about being "liked".

Colin Powell says:

Good leadership involves responsibility to the welfare of the group, which means that some people will get angry at your actions and decisions. It's inevitable if you're honourable. Trying to get everyone to like you is a sign of mediocrity: You'll avoid the tough decisions, you'll avoid confronting the people who need to be confronted, and you'll avoid offering differential rewards based on differential performance because some people might get upset.

Ironically, by procrastinating on the difficult choices, by trying not to get anyone mad, and by treating everyone equally "nicely" regardless of their contributions, you'll simply ensure that the only people you'll wind up angering are the most creative and productive people in the organization."

Leadership also isn't about "my way or the highway". It isn't about one-way communication. True leaders want to hear the bad as much as they want to hear the good. Any leader worth his or her salt will try to build a culture of honesty and not breed "yes men" and "yes women".

In every management position I have ever had, from day one I've told my management team and the troops in general, *"Don't let me screw up. If I fail, the organization fails. If you see me going the wrong way or making the wrong decision tell me. If you sit back and let me go wrong and hurt us all because you're afraid to speak up, then you've failed. If you say yes to everything I suggest because you think I want to hear that, you're wrong. Tell me what you're thinking, I want that input"*.

That doesn't mean the suggestions will always steer you. A strong leader will take all of that input and synthesize it with his or her understanding of other internal and external factors and make a decision. The key is to get

the right input and consider it. Sometimes it will cause you to go a better way.

The proof is later in the pudding. How many of you have seen so-called leaders ask for input then scoff at it or jump on people when they give it? Doesn't attract much more input does it. Hands slowly lower in the crowd. But if the decision-is properly communicated, the smart young folks we are hiring will usually understand why.

I've said many times, "*good idea, but we need to go this way for this reason*". I've also said many times, "*You're right, I was wrong, let's do it*". Then follow it up by ensuring you give credit where credit is due.

Conversely, when you make a decision that turns out to be a bad one, step up to the plate. Admitting wrong, taking blame and not passing it to the undeserving, is what leadership is.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MANAGER AND A LEADER?
IS THERE ONE?

There are huge differences in my opinion.

"Management" is understanding policy, making sure there are efficiencies and checks and balances in the system, rules, crossing "ts" and dotting "is".

Leaders are visionaries – managers are planners.

Leaders care about substance, managers about form and process.

Leaders inspire – managers motivate.

ARE THERE GREAT LEADERS OUT THERE WHO ARE ALSO
EFFICIENT MANAGERS – KEEP THE I'S DOTTED AND T'S CROSSED –
YOU'RE DARN RIGHT.

BUT:

Chris Lewis' slant: "In a perfect world, all leaders would have the right mix of leadership and management skills – in the real world, I'd take the leader any day of the week and ensure they are supported by good managers to ensure the is are dotted and the ts crossed".

We need to ensure people from top to bottom in our organizations are leaders. As leaders we must LEAD BY EXAMPLE. It's hard to develop good leaders and promote leadership if you're a poor example yourself.

Without leadership – morale suffers, productivity declines, and ethical lines may be crossed.

Remember: Leadership requires actions, not just thoughts, talk and promises.

True leaders don't just say the right thing...they actually do it."

All of you here tonight have inspired many through your generosity, your gifts to the community, and your volunteer commitments.

All of this for communities, to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity, where our homeless can find shelter, where no one has to go hungry. These are all gifts that can and will change our communities in such a positive way. That my friends is leadership.

I'd like to finish off today with a poem. Not that I am into poetry as a rule, but this one caught my attention and I think it sums up a lot of what I have been saying here this evening, and what you have been doing across Simoce County, as true leaders in your communities.

TO BE A LEADER
S. Oltman Stoker

To be a winner you must set your sights and see them through.
To be a leader's harder – for others need you too.

Now leadership is something that is not within you bred.
It doesn't spring from habitat nor bounds into your head.

It comes from lessons lived and learned and followed every day.
Like pennies saved are pennies earned, you gain them on your way.

The first and most important one to put upon your shelf...
Don't ask of others something done... you wouldn't do yourself.

Set standards of high quality. Then be yourself no worse.
They'll meet those virtues if they see that you achieved them first.

Next understand each heart-felt dream of where they want to be.
Then work together as a team to help them to achieve...

Their own perceptions of what they hold as a special goal.
Each small success in every way contributes to the whole.

Remember as you lead the way that loyalty is like glue.
Make all you do and all you say show they can count on you.

To be a leader you must set your sights and see them through.
And put a little honest sweat in everything you do.

Thank you very much for your time and please keep doing what you do so
well for communities everywhere.