

Leading The Team - With Energy

Born or made, leaders stand out from the crowd.

Actually, leaders are ordinary people. First and foremost, a leader's job is to lead a team, and that means being part of the team - someone who can sit down at the tea table and have a chat just as well as the rest of us.

Leaders have additional attributes though - maybe flamboyant, possibly unassuming. But what every leader needs is drive and plenty of positive energy.

Many leaders are extroverts who are highly motivated and thrive on work and the desire to keep progressing. Others though may be quietly confident, yet decisive and determined. Either way, they are energetic, they live and breathe the business vision, and encourage others to do the same.



Challenges are Opportunities

Successful leaders also have a highly positive attitude to business. They know that businesses face challenges every day. The key is to view those challenges as opportunities to learn and grow, rather than as yet another ordeal to wade through.

Being in business is about facing challenges and the positive leader will thrive on finding a way around them.

Jack Welch knows about challenges. He spent 40 years at General Electric and led the company to success time and time again as CEO. In his book *Winning*, he shares very candidly what he's learnt about leadership over the years.

Candidly Speaking

Candour, in fact, is one of the most important qualities of any leader, he says. It's about being open and honest with your team about what you think and what's happening, and encouraging others to do the same. If it's happening from the top, candour will permeate the entire business and keep ideas bubbling.

"Lack of candour," on the other hand "blocks smart ideas, fast action, and good people contributing all the stuff they've got. It's a killer,"¹ he says.

Welch also looks for other attributes in leaders including:

- Edge - the courage to make tough decisions
- Execution - the ability to get the job done
- Passion - about work and life generally
- Authenticity - being true to yourself, real

¹ *Winning*, by Jack Welch, Harper Collins Publishers,

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Manage Your team

Running a business is hard work. There's no doubt you are busy, often running the show, doing the marketing, business development and operations all rolled into one.

Oh, and did I mention HR? That's right, human resources. As a leader your focus must be to manage your team. Yes, it's a huge component of your time; unfortunately for many small business owners it's non-existent.

But, that's your job - to constantly motivate, inspire and coach your team. Obviously you can't do that in isolation! Leadership is not about making rules and expecting everyone to keep to them. It's about:

- Working as a team to discuss ideas and ways forward
- Listening
- Encouraging self-confidence
- Recognising great work
- Looking for new avenues they could take or courses with which to upskill
- Upholding the business vision and encouraging others to do the same
- Accepting responsibility for mistakes
- Celebrating the successes

So, if leading people must be your main focus, how does everything else get done? Let's look at another important attribute of leaders - the ability to delegate.



Delegate, Delegate

You need to realise, preferably early on, that you simply cannot do it all yourself. You become much more effective if you are systematic - determine the tasks needed to run the business, establish portfolio descriptions for each of them and then allocate the tasks to your team.

By giving responsibilities to your team, you not only empower them, you also free up your own time to manage the people running your business.

So, is a leader born or made?

In many cases, that positive zest for life and ability to energise others is often a case of: 'you've either got it or you haven't'. But other qualities can definitely be learned. According to Jack Welch, attributes like 'edge' and the ability to get things done are often fine tuned through experience.

So never stop learning. Successful leaders are constantly seeking new information to learn, new personal skills to attain and more effective ways to work with people. Don't ever dig your head in the sand!

Be sure to read each article with the mindset "How this could apply to our business".

Thinking of it that way will guarantee that you get value. Also make copies for each team member. To really make sure something positive happens, work with your business development specialists to talk your team through ideas.



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Next Steps - Become a Great Leader

Many people wonder just what the role of a leader is, or how you actually go about leading. Being a leader is a people-oriented role. Once you become a leader, you take on the role of managing the people - the people who run the business. To be a great leader you need to be:

- Energetic - have a positive attitude to life and the challenges of business, and energise others
- Inspirational - see the big picture and guide your team to reach their goals
- A coach and motivator - place great importance on your role in helping the team grow and develop
- A team player - accept your responsibility as leader yet make sure everyone has the opportunity to voice their ideas
- A great communicator - be upfront with what's going on and keep everyone informed; encourage one-on-one meetings with team members; listen
- Decisive - be able to solve problems and make firm decisions for better or worse
- True to yourself - have integrity and take responsibility for your mistakes
- A lifelong learner - value the opportunity for ongoing personal development



Make Performance Appraisals Real

Are your team's performance appraisals worth the paper they are written on?

Great leaders put high value on *formally* checking in with their team at least once per year. The annual performance appraisal is an opportunity for managers to evaluate how the employee is going and where he or she could improve.

At best, it's a highly candid, two-way process, where the manager and employee can discuss his or her position and performance and together agree on a self-development programme for the forthcoming year.

At worst, it can be viewed as a total waste of time by employees if managers are not honest, do not give meaningful evaluations and personal development is continuously delayed or not carried out.

Performance appraisals are a top management priority if you want to retain committed, trained, experienced employees, who are encouraged to bring their brains to their desks and work spaces rather than leave them at the door.

A quote from Jack Welch's book *Winning* (Harper Collins, 2005) tells of an employee who spoke on behalf of thousands when the employees at his company had finally been given a voice: "For twenty-five years, you paid for my hands when you could have had my brain as well - for nothing."

"Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others."

Winning, by Jack Welch, Harper Collins Publishers, 2005.

An important Message

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Hang On to Those Great Team Members

Recruiting new team members is time-consuming and expensive. And even then, you don't always get it right and often have to go through the process again.

Yes, recruitment is necessary but wouldn't it be better to put more resources into holding onto your current staff?

Let's look then at what keeps great team members in their job. Obviously people do want to be rewarded for their excellent work, but surveys show money is definitely not the only thing driving them. Employees also need responsibilities, independence, job satisfaction through interesting work, security, promotion, growth, good working conditions and a workplace culture based on open communication.

Some of the ways you could achieve this include:

- Get all the team involved in decision making and establish one-on-one meetings; be an effective listener
- Keep the team informed with the big picture as well as the work-in progress
- Don't micro-manage - give team members their independence
- Always try to hire internally first
- Take performance appraisals seriously and be open and candid in your evaluations
- Look at career development opportunities with staff and encourage all employees to improve their skills and take on new responsibilities
- Develop flexible human resource policies on matters such as:
 - Parental leave
 - Working time arrangements
 - Sharing of jobs
- Treat all ideas, suggestions, issues and problems with utmost importance and action your promises

If an employee does resign, conduct an exit interview to obtain feedback. If there's a problem somewhere, you need to be able to fix it before losing any further good staff



Who's Out There for the Small Business?

When you get out and start networking, business starts pulsing.

We all know what happens when you stay locked in your office - you stop talking, you start worrying and that's usually bad for business!

On the other hand, constantly meeting new people and talking about your businesses or about business issues has the exact opposite effect. You swap ideas, you share information, you form alliances, you learn about others, you give and receive referrals, and your business grows. It's motivating and a highly effective way to do business.

It also pays to be up with the play on what's happening in your local business environment, or your industry group.

So where do you find these groups? Well, you might network with business acquaintances or professional colleagues on an informal basis, but now, more and more formal groups are starting up.

Some, such as the BNI networking group, meet weekly and, to prevent competition, only allow one type of profession into each chapter, although a large town may have several chapters. BNI groups are located throughout the country.

Local chambers of commerce run frequent networking events such as 'After 5' evenings, networking breakfasts, women's events or larger conferences.

There's also the home business website catering for the rapidly growing number of home-based businesses.

You may have a specific networking group attached to your specialist industry. Look into everything and find out what suits best. And remember, good networking is not all about you - it's about meeting and helping others.

Try these websites:

www.nzchambers.co.nz - for information on local chambers of commerce

www.ema.co.nz - the employers and manufacturers association

www.bni.co.nz - for information on local BNI groups around the country

www.homebizbuzz.co.nz - for loads of information for the home-based business

www.herbusinessmagazine.com - *Her Business* magazine which gives information on local groups.