

Defining What It Means To Be A Leader

The “leadership” word is tossed about quite a bit in business — and during the election season. Have you stopped to ponder what leadership means in your business, in the organizations you are part of — even within your family and community?

There are many books, compelling quotes — and opinions — on the subject of leadership. With this regular column, we will spotlight an assortment of leadership items for readers to consider. Perhaps you’ll find a place to incorporate some of these tactics into your everyday endeavors.

Leadership, after all, is a skill that is honed over time in the battlefield of life. It’s about becoming the best person you can be, while inspiring others to do the same. A simple quote that captures that thought — and the essence of leadership — is this: “A candle loses nothing of its light by lighting another candle.” Are you being a candle of leadership for others?

Are you a real leader?

“Real” leaders inspire others to lead wherever they find themselves in the organization. So says Ritch Eich, author of the book *“Real Leaders Don’t Boss.”*

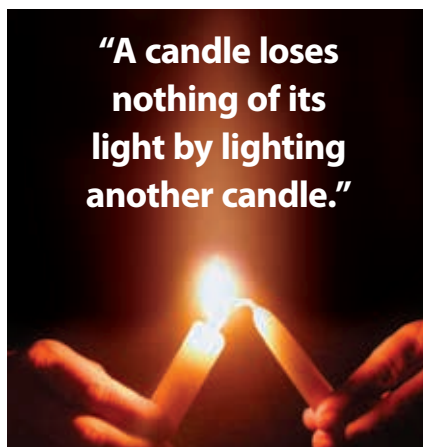
“Real leaders are rare in today’s fast-moving, financially driven world,” states Eich. He observes that there are far too many bosses and not enough leaders. Bosses who are too narrowly focused often see employees as tools to control rather than to empower.

In his book Eich dedicates a chapter to what he identifies as the eight essentials of effective leadership:

1) Real leaders don’t boss.

They are calm in their style yet have zero tolerance for bullies, who, in any capacity, undermine performance and morale.

2) Real leaders have a central compass. They aspire to do what’s right and be a part of something bigger than themselves.



- 3) Real leaders communicate with clarity, honesty, and directness and know how to listen.
- 4) Real leaders have a unique makeup. Their passion translates into a strong corporate culture.
- 5) Real leaders value and support everyone. They lead — out front as well as behind the scenes.
- 6) Real leaders know when to get out of the way.
- 7) Real leaders are accessible. They are humble and easily approachable.
- 8) Real leaders know the difference between character and integrity and why it takes both to succeed.

These eight essentials are about treating people right, Eich concludes. He adds, “It is these opportunities to rise above our present situation and environment that we should be seeking out and providing for our children — the next generation of leaders.”

Working on vs. working in

You’ve probably heard the phrase “working on your business vs. working in your business,” meaning that rather than getting bogged down in the day-

to-day business details, a visionary manager — or leader — must spend his time looking forward to find opportunities and to work on growing the business.

A feature profiling Stephen McDonnell, founder of the New Jersey-based meat company Applegate Farms, in *Inc. Magazine* illustrated this concept quite well.

For background: Applegate Farms has a 25-year history and \$200 million in revenue today. The company is one of the largest natural and organic food brands in the U.S., selling to small specialty food stores, Whole Foods and big chain supermarkets.

Surprisingly, McDonnell is a very hands-off manager, who says that for the past 25 years, he has physically gone to the office only about once a week — occasionally through certain periods twice a week but rarely more.

McDonnell says, “I work largely out of my office at home. I think you can observe what’s happening so much easier from the outside than when you’re inside of it. Your whole outlook changes. You actually become kind of a therapist to your organization. When you’re inside it, you’re the patient.”

Could your business survive — and thrive — if you were only physically present once a week? What opportunities might you discover if you had more time to work on the future of your business? Obviously, McDonnell has done an exceptional job of putting the right team in place to handle the day-to-day details, so he can devote time to the greater mission of the company. It’s a concept we can all strive for. **HW**

Editor’s Note: *In this issue we introduce a new column focused on leadership. Each column will include lessons related to business management and motivation.*