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Taking Your Team to the Next Level: What Leaders and Aspiring Leaders Need to Know

Whether the setting is an academic medical center or a playing field, the effectiveness of a team is a reflection on its leader.

“Any individual on a team can shine, but a leader knows how to inspire everyone to reach their best personal effectiveness so the whole team can succeed,” says mentor, trainer and speaker Charles Durrenberger.

Qualities of a leader

Durrenberger, already a highly successful entrepreneur, had a desire to learn more about leadership. This led him to attend workshops, become a certified mentor in 2014, and then become an executive director of the John Maxwell Team (JMT) earlier this year.¹ JMT programs are based on the principles and vision of John C. Maxwell, who has been named the most influential leadership expert in the world by

¹ Durrenberger is certified by the John Maxwell Team (JMT) to facilitate, speak, train and coach individuals and groups in the areas of leadership development, professional skills and personal growth. Comments are his own and not made on behalf of JMT.



Business Insider and *Inc.* magazines.

There are four essential traits a leader must have, Durrenberger has learned.

Confidence. “People will always follow the strongest leader,” says Durrenberger. “Without strong leadership skills, a person in the leader role will have less influence over people they need to influence.”

Authenticity. “You can’t try to be authentic. You either are or you aren’t,” observed actor Oscar Isaac.

“A leader must be true to everything they do and say, personally and professionally,” Durrenberger emphasizes. “There’s a huge payoff for that: undivided loyalty from their team.”

Humility. A recent study from the W. P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University shows that CEOs who demonstrate humility significantly benefit a company and its management.

“There is a negative stereotype that humble people are weak and indecisive,” says Angelo Kinicki, professor in the W. P. Carey School of Business and one of the study’s authors.

“That’s just not the case.”

“Humble CEOs are more open to making joint decisions and empowering others,” Kinicki says. “Their behavior positively affects both top and middle managers, who then exhibit

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A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.

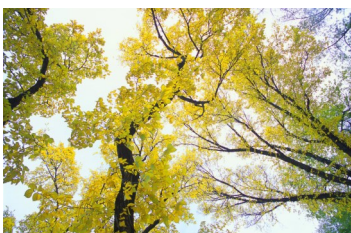
- John C. Maxwell

Developing New Leaders for Future Success

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Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.

- Albert Schweitzer



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higher commitment, work engagement, job satisfaction and job performance.”²

Passion. “You have to want to be an effective leader,” Durrenberger says. “A leader gains the attributes of leadership through experiences. They have to do it in order to learn whether they enjoy it, and they learn quickly whether it’s something they aspire to. A passionate leader sees more than other people, and they see it before others do. Their mindset is so engaged in the success of team that they are always looking for ways to make things better.”

Leading through times of change

The best leaders have the ability to guide teams through periods of uncertainty and change. “Leading during change requires complete and concise communication,” Durrenberger says. “Make it as simple as possible. A lack of that communication can cause ambiguity, tension, mistrust and lack of cooperation.”

² “Humble Chief Executive Officers’ Connections to Top Management Team Integration and Middle Managers’ Responses,” accessed July 17, 2017. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0001839213520131>

John C. Maxwell put it this way: “Most people don’t like change. They revolt against it unless they can clearly see the advantage it brings. For that reason, when good leaders prepare to take action or make changes, they take people through a process to get them ready for it.”

Leaders can equip themselves for inevitable change by constantly honing and updating their skills.

It’s essential to be a lifelong learner, says Durrenberger. “Career circumstances change, and people move into new jobs and roles. The only way to be ahead of change is by constantly updating yourself.”

Developing new leaders

A good leader takes an interest in developing others’ leadership skills. “There are a couple of ways to look at this,” says Durrenberger. “From a selfish perspective, who’s going to take over when you go on vacation, or there’s an illness in the family? The less selfish perspective is that every person you grow and promote around you can increase the effectiveness of the team, and increase your personal influence within the

team and among your peers.”

Asking for honest feedback

So how can a good leader take the next step toward being even more effective?

Durrenberger suggests that one of most important things you can do for yourself is have a conversation with someone who knows you well.

“Simply ask them, ‘Am I missing something here? Is there something you see in me that I should be working on, to make everyone more effective?’ This ties back to the quality of humility. The best leaders show a willingness to reflect and invite critique, and a willingness to act on that feedback.”

Resources

- www.johnmaxwellgroup.com/charlesdurrenberger
- The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, by John C. Maxwell
- Becoming a Person of Influence, by John C. Maxwell and Jim Dornan
- Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies, by Jim Collins and Jerry I. Porras
- Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...And Others Don't, by Jim Collins