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## Leading By Example

By Paul Gibson



Is management blind to its weaknesses?

Nowadays there are so many books that claim to have the magic formula or magic business model for management. You name any type of business and there's likely to be a book that someone wrote about managing that type of business as if 'management' depended on what type of business you were running. While it goes without saying that there are definitely differences in management styles, the basic concepts and management strategies are the same.

When speaking of management, many authors speak of "human resource management," "financial management" and "operations management." While these are the basic forms of all management, if we take a closer look, all management obeys certain ground rules which they have in common.

Management involves managing people. Managing people involves various tasks: preparing, organising, strategising, assigning, assisting, reporting, measuring, any given task. Most managers forget, but their role is primarily to give example or to set the precedent for everyone to follow. This is the traditional "lead by example."

Chances are that if you want to identify the weaknesses in any organisation, spend most of your time identifying the weaknesses of their managers. Even if a business seems infallible, successful even invincible...bad management can destroy

it both inside and out. So what is the key to "leading by example"? So, does all this mean that any business is condemned to failure just because we human beings are imperfect? NO! Of course not!

A good manager takes advantage of his weaknesses and turns them into giant steps toward success. The first step is to identify your weaknesses. This is no small task. Normally, management is blind to the fact that weakness exists among their ranks. So they bring in teams of 'auditors' or 'consultants' to analyze the situation. Most of these teams come in and ask seemingly senseless questions...

I still remember having to attend these unreasonable, impertinent seminars on "company strategy" which consisted in how I felt... about if I felt wanted, if I felt useful, if I was happy with my work or if I was happy with management. These seminars are ABSOLUTELY USELESS, a colossal waste of money, and an even greater loss of time. Does anyone really believe that an employee is going to complain about their boss? Or does anyone really fall for that line: don't worry, management will never find out because we are independent consultants, so feel free to voice your opinion. This is one of the biggest corporate crimes committed. Here's an original idea: if you want to find out something about your employees, why not talk to them? Yes, we all know that we can't rely on "being a friend of our boss" and managing a "team of friends." This is a huge mistake. A business is like a family...what would happen to the youngsters if parents did not discipline them in any way...what a free-for-all! One thing is a family business, and quite another a team of friends. You can count on friends, but you can't demand responsibility or liability for how they perform.

So what is the key to managing people? As in any special circumstances, the first step is to get to know the people you are managing... not on a personal level, just to get an idea of how they work. How do you do this? There is no set rule on this one... it could be just going out for coffee and introducing yourself, or just stopping by an employee's work station and observing. You can learn a lot about a person, just by opening their desk drawer. How do mothers learn or get to know their children...the exact same way...by "living" with them. Management is much the same method...you have to "live" with your employees. Some people

talk about the classic manager who stays in his office, behind closed doors...inaccessible. This is an example of how NOT to manage. No, it's because my boss is a very important man... well, that maybe, it's just that your boss must be a very important employee, not a manager.

Managers identify, innovate, resolve and improve. That is their function. They don't report, count, measure, forecast, etc. They strategise, decide, lead, and above all, insure that everyone else realises what their role is, how to play it out, and how to improve in their work.

Many say that in order to be a manager, you need to have passed through the ranks. You can't really manage a group of people if you haven't played the same role they have in an organisation. Well, aside from the fact that this is technically impossible in certain organisations, I contend that this is the worst possible scenario for management. The major problem is that employees fall into the trap of believing that their manager is one of them... and nothing could be further from the truth. Viceversa, the manager believes that since he used to be a lowly employee, now he is something special for being manager and now he needs to change his day-to-day duties. This normally leads to disaster. One thing is "change management" and another this is managing the very changes you make just to be different.

There is a grave sickness in the major corporations of America. It's called "impressing someone else," "schmoozing," in other words... Everyone schmoozes, lies, does what it takes...to impress someone else. Do you mean to tell me that all of these high-powered, flamboyant, solid rock, stern executives are all a bunch of spineless individuals with no self-confidence? The majority yes. It's because we often confuse pride with self-confidence. We think that an executive that makes a decision, that celebrates a dinner, that feels proud of himself while not recognising the sweat and fatigue of his employees is a VIP. Unfortunately, this is true the majority of the time.

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