



THE PLAN - LEAD - EXCEL NEWSLETTER

Strategic Leadership: Keeping Your Head in Troubled Times

*"If you can keep your head when all about
you Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt
you, But make allowance for their doubting
too;*

*. . . If you can meet with Triumph and
Disaster And treat those two impostors just
the same*

*. . . Yours is the Earth and everything that's in
it"* Rudyard Kipling
Excerpts from "If"

My operations leader and I were discussing an upcoming major organizational change which was having a considerable negative impact on the organization. As we wrestled with the problem and possible courses of action, none of which were particularly attractive, he commented that, though at that point I seemed as frustrated as any of them, I always presented a positive attitude to the organization. I told him that, as leaders, we were always being watched and that the attitude we portrayed would tend to shape the organization's attitude. If we portrayed a negative attitude, soon the organization would be negative as well. This is something that leaders often seem to forget -- you set the tone! It was difficult to walk out among the workers (which I love to do) and continue to

Are your people loyal to you? Do they support you? If not, or you're not sure, ask yourself this. Are you loyal to them? Do you support them? Do they know that you will always represent their best interests to your boss? Loyalty works both ways. The best technique is to practice the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Notice there is no disclaimer stating this rule doesn't apply to leaders. "Loyalty" is one of my "Inviolable Rules of Leadership." You can download that and all the rules for free at www.planleadexcel.com/leadership.

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present a positive demeanor, but it was vital for a leader to do so.

That doesn't mean you lie to your people, quite the contrary. You must be completely honest with them at all times, but you can still remain upbeat about the situations you face. If you have bad news, don't hide it, put it out for all to see, but at the same time, let them see that you still have a positive attitude. In his 1981 inaugural address, President Ronald Reagan faced a nation in economic despair; a nation depressed and unsure about the future. He clearly and succinctly laid out the issues, pulling no punches concerning the severity of the situation. But then he told the nation that something could, and would be done and that the citizens were the most important element in the solution. He presented a positive attitude that helped the nation recover.

During my time in the military I learned what a substantial effect a leader's attitude can have on an organization. The stress of military action seems to bring out the best in most people, but the stress of military inspections seems to sometimes have the opposite effect. Though inspections often seemed to be only marginally related to an organization's mission, they did test a leader's ability to provide consistent, positive leadership. In one instance I will never forget, the organization's senior leadership made an assumption early in the inspection that we had made a critical error and failed. They spent the remainder of the inspection moping around with a "woe is me" attitude and by the end of the inspection they had completely abdicated their leadership responsibility in favor of hand-wringing. Their negative attitude infected the entire organization and became a self-fulfilling prophesy.

Many leaders today are facing difficult times.

Bob's new book



Planning to Excel
Strategic Planning That Works

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This short book provides everything an organization's leader needs to create a basic strategic plan. The book includes worksheets to record ideas as you progress through the planning process. You can preview the Introduction and first chapter entitled "Why You Need this Book" at

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I welcome your feedback. If you have comments about the newsletter or its content,

It can be increasingly difficult to put a positive spin on your situation but it is the leader's responsibility to stay positive. How do you do that? First, as I mentioned previously, be completely honest at all times. If you must withhold information, be honest about that. It is vital for everyone to see the leader as someone who is working for them and who can be trusted to give them the straight story. If your primary concern in dealing with this or any other situation is self-enrichment, do everyone a favor and quit. Right now. Don't even finish reading this article. If you're mainly worried about your career, you are or will quickly become part of the problem.

Next, get out of your office and see your people. Go where they are and talk to them. I find that this single step is the most effective way to boost my own moral. It's difficult though because people will express their concerns to you, sometimes quite forcefully. Your reaction will demonstrate your resolve to find solutions and support them. Tell them where the problems are and what is being done. Don't make things up, they'll see right through that.

People look to their leaders to lead, especially when the going gets tough. They want honest but positive leadership. A leader with a negative or defeatist attitude will also accomplish something though. It's called failure.

Kipling's poem ends with
*"Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And -- which is more -- you'll be a Man, my
son!"*

If I may paraphrase Kipling -- If you can do these things yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, and -- which is more -- you'll be a

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positive leader!

Until next time,

Plan - Lead - Excel.

Bob

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