

Leadership: It's Not Just Positional; It's Personal (973 words)

Ever since I was a small child sitting in the back of the Rosendale Town Hall, during the Rosendale Skippers 4-H Club meetings, I was watching leadership in action. All three of my older brothers became president of the club, so I did, too. Since those early years, I have continued to study leadership. This article reflects some of the strategies that I suggest to seasoned and emerging leaders: Move from potential to influential, unleash your power bases, adapt your style to the situation, and establish and maintain your personal brand.

Move from Potential to Influential: There are four essential skills you need to develop your leadership potential: Conceptual skills, human skills, technical skills, and political skills.

Conceptual Skills: The imagination to see what could be, rather than, just what is. It is the mental ability to coordinate all of the organization's interests and activities. **Human Skills:** Hone the interpersonal communication skills necessary to establish and maintain trust and resolve conflict. The ability to work with, understand, and motivate other people, both individually and in groups. **Technical Skills:** Develop a deep understanding of your organization and the products and the services it delivers. The ability to use tools, procedures, and techniques of a specialized field. Knowing how things work. **Political Skills:** Pay attention and develop the ability to enhance one's position, build a power base, and establish the right connections. Politics relates to who gets what, when, and how.

If you have leadership potential, please review the list and get to work on what needs to be improved. Focus on and develop these four skills of leadership, you won't just appear to have leadership potential, you will acquire leadership positions.

Unleash Your Power Bases: We all know people that have the title, have the office, and even have their name on the door. They have the position, but they don't seem to have the power.

There are three more power bases, other than position, that you can develop. Consider **reward power**, where you can influence by granting desirable consequences for great performance, praising someone you respect, and spending time with team members and coworkers. There is also **expert power**, you can influence by what people believe you know, subtle mention of your past experience, and sharing your knowledge freely to help the team reach its goals and objectives. Finally, there is **referent power**, which comes from the respect, liking, and trust others have for you. Team members believe in you because you listen to their ideas, honor their contributions, and take a win/win approach to problem solving and decision making.

When you get the title, that's a good start, now get to work on developing the other three power bases.

Adapt Your Style to the Situation: When it comes to your leadership style, you may need to be flexible and lead based upon the situation. It comes down to two things, competence and confidence, your individual staff member is either competent, or not, confident, or not. So, you will need to modify your leadership style to fit the situation. If your staff member is competent and confident you need to simply delegate. Be careful not to over delegate and burn them out. If your staff member is competent, but lacks confidence, then you need to focus on the relationship and provide emotional support by telling them you believe in them. If your staff member lacks competence, but has confidence, tackle them before they leave your office. They are all excited; they just don't know what they are doing. Focus on training and provide full explanation of the task. If your staff member lacks competence and lacks confidence, now you will be participating by providing both training and social support to get them on track.

The key to effective leadership is to pay attention to each individual staff member, stay in touch with them and work to understand what kind of issues they are facing. Then simply focus on the task, or the relationship, neither, or both.

Establish and Maintain Your Personal Brand: The knowledge, skill, and ability you bring to work every day is your personal brand. Every manager has a personal brand, 2,500 hundred years ago they called it ethos. When people hear your name, what do they think? If your reputation precedes you, what is it? The answers to these questions is your personal brand.

A brand is a promise of specific benefits and values, how the product will work, how it will make us feel, and how it will affect our lives. So, you are a brand. A brand is a strategic asset that is key to long-term performance and should be managed so. A brand lives in the customer's mind, it's a trust, a perception based on experience. So, you are a brand.

Powerful brands focus on "owning" a single relevant benefit or value that differentiates it from all others in the market place. So, you are a brand. So what is your unique background? What have you been up to for the last 5, 10 or 15 years? Because you know that and can do that, how does your organization benefit? How do internal and external customers feel when they work with you? What are your values, standards, and ethics? And how about your personality? What is it like to work with you, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year? That is your personal brand.

Think about the great value you provide for your organization, your coworkers, and customers. You sold yourself, your skills, talents, and abilities, during the interview to get your job, now remind people with your good work, what a great decision it was to hire you.

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