

Leaders: Are they Built or Born?

*Have you heard someone say, "He or she is a born leader"? I don't believe leadership is a quality that one is born with but rather a learned and practiced skill that develops over time. John Maxwell, in his book *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, supports my beliefs and says "Leadership develops daily, not in a day. Successful leaders are learners."*

Everyone has the ability to be an effective leader no matter their background or positional equity. Leaders influence, persuade, inspire, motivate, and spearhead change in an organization. Here are a few simple tips to enhance your role as a leader in your organization.

1. It's important to accomplish your organizations' goals through your team

With three generations represented in the workforce, you must be emotionally self-aware of your behavior and the behaviors of those you lead. According to Daniel Goleman (2002), Co-Author of the book *Primal Leadership*, emotional self-awareness involves a leader's ability to be in tune with their inner signals, as well as their respective counterparts. Various personality/behavioral style assessments are readily available to assist with this. Identifying your own personal style will help you to identify with others, thus, assess an individuals' "fit" on the team or within the organization. Through this approach, (Bolman and Deal, 2008) your team will recognize how feelings, emotions, and behaviors affect their reactions and job performance.

2. To be a successful leader, you must lead by example

You cannot separate character from leadership. Character communicates consistency, potential, and respect. People buy into a leader before they buy into a vision. Trust is the foundation for success. Who you are is who you attract. One must be transparent in his or her actions and intentions. This can be demonstrated through open lines of communication and displayed through emotion, passion, and enthusiasm towards individual and group success.

3. A leader touches a heart before he or she asks for a hand

You can't move your team to action unless you first move them with emotion. Get out on the floor and walk around and talk to your associates. Be empathetic towards what is going on in their lives. Practice open and frequent communication so they are aware of what's going on in the organization. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. To lead yourself use your head...to lead others it's important to use your heart.

Remember..."you can compete through technology but you win with people." As a leader, everything you do sends a message to all those around you. I challenge you to ask yourself this question, "If I no longer had my title/position, would people still want to follow me?" Make an effort to identify your own individual strengths, your own behavioral style as well those around you, and develop an action plan to improve your effectiveness as a leader – by doing so you will grow your support and make great strides in your organization.

For more information on how GaMEP can help with leadership and communication amongst generations:

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Expertise includes: workforce development, leadership, process improvement, quality systems, and more

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