

True leaders set up positive outcomes

Debbie Nicol

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Change is the domain of leaders. It brings shifts and turns, some more seismic than others.

Recently, I witnessed a performance management review session delivered by a person "blessed" with the title of leader – a title clearly not deserved. Conflict ensued, potential was ignored, non-evidenced judgement was made and "blanket assumptions" were integrated. Any potential healthy relationship, engagement, learning and opportunity for change as well as factual feedback were completely buried. And any potential productivity was laid to rest in a coffin, with this manager also throwing away the key.

True leaders, on the other hand, should create shifts in conditions, situations, mindsets and resources for positive outcomes in others.

Recently I asked random people two questions, based on leadership research from the executive educators James M Kouzes and Barry Z Posner. The first requested them to recall the worst leaders in their career while reflecting on what percentage of talent and performance they facilitated. Conversely, the second question asked them to recall their best leaders. The answers lined up perfectly with research, with the worst leaders bringing out 0 to 40 per cent of talent and performance and best leaders 40 to 110 per cent.

Now there's a shift in performance levels. Imagine: the highest level of talent and performance that one person facilitates in a workplace is equal to the lowest another achieves. Additionally, the "best leader" achieved over and above full performance at 110 per cent, which really could be 110 per cent more than the worst.

Another body of research from the change management research company Prosci indicates that providing structured assistance for people influences the likelihood of achieving objectives by six times.

Recently I also interacted with a team in distress, a team with no synergy, commonality, trusted dependency, understanding nor cooperative willingness as they drowned in dysfunction, suspicion, stagnation and desperation. It was obvious that CV's were flowing to external recruiters at the rate of knots. When I spent time with the head of the team, what quickly became evident was a total lack of interest and involvement. When the discussion moved towards facilitating a team initiative, the first reaction was for it to be held during his holiday. Astonishment was evident when I suggested that leaders were a major part of the "cause and effect" factor, and that no initiative should proceed without his involvement.

If change is really the domain of leaders, how much are those with the title willing to look at themselves? Do leaders also require personal development and transition? The answer is a resounding yes.

Would you consider the following inventory as a checkpoint on your leadership?

- How accessible are you for your people?
- How "real" are you to the people?
- How consistent are you in actions?
- How clear are you on where you are taking them?
- How much do you believe in the changes you are proposing?
- How capable are you of sharing reasons why?
- How patient are you, recognising that everyone processes differently?
- How reliable are you to enable trust to flow?
- How easily will you share your experience with others?
- How much do you welcome mistakes as a learning opportunity?
- How much are you willing to let go?
- How interested are you in recognising individual wins and rewarding these?
- How much do you build community spirit?

Your people's engagement levels are directly correlated to how your people perceive your behaviour. Actions speak louder than words and the mirror simply doesn't lie. It can be tough to accept that we may be part of the problem, yet once awareness exists, it provides opportunity to move towards action.

Rumi, the great philosopher, professed: "Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself." Making the transition into leadership and change can be bumpy, yet the great news is leadership is a set of learning, teachable and measurable behaviours. When will you be putting your hand up for that?

Debbie Nicol, based in Dubai, is the managing director of business emotion and a consultant on leadership and organisational development, strategic change and corporate culture.

business@thenational.ae

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