

# Effective leadership takes adaptability

Debbie Nicol

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Effective leaders take ideas to the moon, yet keep feet firmly on the ground; achieving the extraordinary is piecemeal for them. Their humility, passion and dedication is priceless, and has been chronicled for centuries. Today's leaders are extending this list of virtues, with the ability to identify needs that are neither tangible nor visible. Their innovation and change is tapping into needs that hail from emotional disconnection with people, places and resources.

## Great leadership examples 'close to home'

Take Abdulla Al Shehhi, an Emirati on a mission. He recognises the importance of water and its dwindling reserves, dedicating his business to reduced water consumption. Many wouldn't care – Mr Al Shehhi does. His first venture, Q2 General Cleaning Services, a car wash facility located in most major shopping centres, uses minimal water per wash while maintaining a quality service. Data now demonstrates a large amount of litres per car wash are saved through his car-washing methodology. No longer content with that success, Mr Al Shehhi is now exploring additional avenues to provide access to water that may otherwise be wasted.

Take the person behind squirrel.me, a great example of leadership in today's business environment as it taps into consumers' lack of discipline with money. Rather than having your entire salary spent in the first few days of the month, Squirrel withholds portions of a salary, distributing it weekly as per standing instructions. Governed and regulated for legal purposes, the company withholds an amount of salary until a dedicated financial target or goal has been met. Squirrel's founder recognised the need for financial discipline by connecting with the emotional degradation of people in its absence.

Similarly, Ambareen Musa, from the financial comparison website Souqalmaal.com, chose not to stand by and watch families suffer because they did not understand how credit cards work and the fees they can attract through misuse. Many wouldn't care, but Ms Musa does. She is passionate about equipping buyers with the knowledge and ability to purchase within their means, and has done so in a language a layman would understand. This online marketplace takes the worry and complexity out of obtaining a credit card. Emotional reconnection and family happiness is again at the core of a business.

Humility is evident with founders of such initiatives. They recognise that leaders do not and cannot stand alone while forging positive change. They quite often do not take stock of just how far they have travelled until a major milestone or award occurs and then they pay the praise forward to their teams.

## The world rewards their contributions

In today's business landscape, the world pays homage to these "connected" business leaders. It provides them opportunity and power, allowing them to demonstrate time and again that leadership taps into a purpose. Without

purpose there really would be no leadership.

Quite often the purpose is intangible. In Mr Al Shehhi's case, he's not driven by a product or service, but rather a genuine concern about lack of water, and hence his purpose is to both conserve existing water supplies and discover untapped sources of water. This intangible can only help in a world with dwindling reserves of water, and the business world provides greater exposure to, and support for, his ideas.

In Ms Musa's case, she's also not driven by a product or service, but rather a genuine concern of large entities having no empathy for families who may not have the same level of understanding regarding finance. And hence her purpose provides financial education, in plain English and simple terms. This then facilitates informed decision-making for families. This intangible can only help in a world with increasing debt and anguish; the business world in turn is providing Souqalmal.com greater exposure and opportunity.

This type of power and exposure produces positive influence, attracting a viral-like following that in turn become tipping points. These leaders identify great opportunity to serve intangible limitation, frustration, worry or concern, and ensure their actions bring efficiency, peace of mind and engagement.

### **The use of this power**

With this power comes responsibility, and each of the above leaders' immeasurable and invaluable responsibility is given serious attention. They understand that their dreams do not belong to themselves but to a future generation and ensure their beacon of hope will live beyond their own days.

It is true that leaders can be "out there", exploring the land of creation and change. They dare to venture where others will not go, pushing limits and challenging processes at every opportunity. They no longer work only with new ideas in the material world but also connect with human needs in an emotional world, solving issues of an intangible nature. Leadership 2.0 is emerging at our time of greatest need. Are you willing and able to strengthen this movement, assisting where possible?

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