

Young leaders have the courage to disregard the rulebook

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Leaders should take us to new spaces through their vision, passion and desire for positive change. They rarely take no for an answer and open doors where others simply cannot; the world needs more leaders like this.

With today's workplace such a melting pot of generational perspectives and outlooks, why is it common place for the younger-generations' modes of leadership to be left untapped? Does it somehow threaten those of us who have the title?

I was recently approached to be a mentor to a young lady – a role I felt honoured to take on and an invitation I readily accepted for no financial gain.

Her approach gave me no choice really. I consider her a leader already, not only from the personal traits I had observed for some time but also the innovative way she went about gaining my buy-in for this commitment. These included:

1. A positive outlook; "no" was not an option for her

She reached out anonymously a while ago through LinkedIn. Although a mentoring agreement seemed unlikely at first because of my commitment to a large project, she was not to be deterred. She remained focused and forthright, keeping the relationship active until I could have no possible reason to say no. Perseverance matters.

2. She made her move in a fashion I respected

With rejection not even a remote possibility for her, she craftily embedded points from previous discussions into a "mentoring agreement" invitation, placing the ball in my court. It caught my attention. However, what really grabbed my focus was the document's underlying "way of thinking" placing a high priority on mutual gain, something that rarely exists in business today. What a great way to view the world – placing connectivity as well as how I would benefit along with her at the core of all business decisions. For this to be made explicit in a written document was so refreshing. Fresh approaches and mindsets matter. The removal of financial reward was counteracted by the inclusion of "what matters most" to both of us. This agreement reinforced a need for both of us to experience growth through the process. The document also had blanks, where I was encouraged to add my priorities. Flexibility and collaboration matter.

3. Her leadership qualities

a. "What matters most" was consistently reflected in her actions. Credibility comes from doing what you say you will do.

b. Her balanced approach: many variables drive influence for me, none more so than a balanced outlook. What this woman wanted from our business relationship was detailed as equally and clearly as what she did not want from it. Many see the latter as being the elephant in the room, and

prefer to scarp away from the dangers that are associated with revealing it. Her strong commitment to airing the negatives and positives showed sound judgement. Transparency matters.

c. Her understanding of our relationship: a relationship should exist in the space between a mentor and mentee, something she continually focused on. How many current leaders totally ignore the importance of relationship and lead through being right? While awaiting my reply to the invitation to be a mentor, my potential mentee was systematically adding components to facilitate a stronger trust between us such as the referral of some business my way. In my mind, this was not to try to win my mentorship but clearly to honour and strengthen our existing relationship.

d. Allowing fear to be conquered by passion: this woman lives her life "on purpose". Every decision must feel good. Little did I know she was quite fearful of how I might take this approach (we discussed that later), yet when she shared her fears, I marvelled at her conscious choice to push that fear to the side, overpowering it with her "this has to be" attitude. Tenacity matters.

There's a lot that matters in such a great example of leadership, an example in a person with at least two decades less experience than myself. Would I have had the courage to do this 20 or 30 years ago? Definitely not. It was not deemed to be my place to rock the boat, or to impinge on others' time.

And that's why new-gen leadership must be tapped into; it is their place to change things up. They are throwing the rule book out the window, allowing fresh, dynamic approaches to bring value to today's mixed-up world. When will "we", the other side of leadership, the ones who wrote the book all those years ago, recognise that mutual perspectives and mutual gain can and will drive the world? There is simply no other choice.

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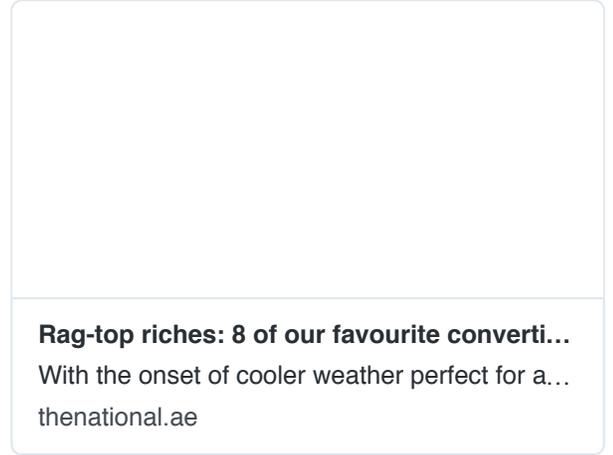




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