

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

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"Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that the impact lasts in your absence." -- Sheryl Sandberg

Leaders are leaders not because of the position they hold or the title printed on their business cards, they are leaders because of what they do. Leading by example is one of the critical leadership practices. Did you know the physiology of the human brain causes people to imitate what they observe? Leading by example means taking risks; doing what is necessary and in many cases doing what no one else is doing! A leader who is positive and encouraging models those qualities for others to follow. By setting a positive example the leader is doing what he or she expects their followers to do. Let's face it, if we have respect for those who lead us, we are more likely to do what they do.

There are numerous ways that you can lead by example. Modeling **positive behavior** by a person in authority whether it be a manager, supervisor, mother, father, or teacher will have a major positive impact on all your relationships and will create a more productive team and thus, potentially more successful relationships and a more successful organization. Your **attitude** is a significant factor. Attitude is contagious. As a leader your attitude matters more than anything else. You set the tone! Others are looking to you and will model the attitude that you project. An effective leader must also have an **awareness** of his or her actions and how those actions impact those around them. So be aware of what you are doing at all times.

Set an example by making yourself **accessible**. This means stop talking too much and **ask questions** to stimulate input from others. Excellent questions promote information clarity, learning, and connection. Being accessible includes maintaining clear lines of **communication** with the people you work with. This will allow you to point others in the right direction and can only be done if you talk with other people, share ideas and respond with clear and concise communication. Of course, effective communication always includes **active listening**. Listening is an important behavior because it not only allows for information to be successfully shared, but it demonstrates to other the other person that you are interested in their thoughts, the information or facts that they are sharing and in who they are.

A leader should be **fully engaged** and willing to embrace what may be different, uncomfortable or new. It is known that leaders who are open to new ideas and change are more effective than those leaders that are not. Being open to others' ideas invites participation and improves the quality of relationships between the leader and those being led. Strong leaders **provide direction**. You can do this by demonstrating your proficiency and expertise by offering suggestions and directions for people who may be having trouble completing a task or project. Be sure to give concrete directions, check in periodically and provide additional direction if required.

Remember, leading by example in personal and working relationships enhances the quality of meaningful interaction, support, team work, productivity and is a powerful tool that can enhance all aspects of your personal and professional life.

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