



Good Leaders and the Golden Rule

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by Greg Buschman and Larry Buschman

In our modern fast-paced society, it seems that few are willing to volunteer to take a leadership position. When asked, however, people are willing to do much as a follower. There are many reasons for this, but as it relates to leadership, the single largest step toward being a leader is the willingness to say, “I will.” Try it the next time someone says, “I need someone to”

Of course, once having volunteered to lead, one must ask, “What do I do?” Before getting into the specifics of leadership, it should be said that the guiding principle behind “what should I do” is the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would want done to you.” Even without further knowledge of leadership principles, following the Golden Rule will be a reliable guide.

Lead from a follower’s perspective



Okay. So far it is “I will” and Golden Rule. But what do you really do? Everyone either is a follower or has been a follower or will be a follower. So, the best perspective of what a leader should do is best seen through the eyes of a follower. However, if the people you are trying to rally are not willingly following you, you are not a leader. Leaders inspire people to want to work towards a goal, and that want must transcend any benefits they will personally gain.

Most good leaders started as good followers. If you are a follower with leadership goals ask yourself, “If I were the leader how would I rate myself as a follower? What would I want my followers to be like? How would I want them to interact with peers, clients and partners?” Also ask yourself, “Why would anyone want to willingly follow me? What would motivate them to work and give an effort that goes beyond what is required?” Write these qualities down and use them as a guide.

Know your why

The first thing a follower wants to know is what he is doing. The first step for the leader is to define a clear set of goals and objectives. Most followers are more motivated if they know why they are doing what they are doing. That is called a mission statement. Write one in clear and concise language.

Have a clear set of goals

If there is a clear set of goals, then a measurement system must be established that provides a clear statement of progress during the project. Also, a communication system must be in place to convey this progress. There are many choices, including periodic review meetings, newsletters, graphs and charts, group emails, etc. You may choose a combination of methods. After the project is complete, there should be an analysis of the success or failure of the group’s efforts.

Project execution

During project execution, a follower will look to the leader to ensure that adequate resources are available to do the work. The measurement and communication systems will provide insight into conditions where resources are lacking and what further resources may be needed.

Avoid micromanagement

A leader should avoid micromanagement. This robs team members of their creativity and application of their skills and talents. Again, the measurement and communication system will indicate when and if corrective action is required.

Feedback is not more money

Followers desire feedback on their work and recognition for success as steps in the plan are completed. Most often this is not money, although at times money may be appropriate. However, a leader must be even-handed when recognizing team members. Unequal treatment is one of the largest disincentives that will destroy a team effort. After successful completion of a project, celebrate! A good leader needs to cheer the team forward.

Create a leadership plan

All these suggestions should be encompassed in a documented project plan. One potential downfall for a leader is to presume that he is the one to build a complete and final plan. The best project plan is built by the entire team after goals and objectives have been discussed. There should be complete buy-in to the plan from all team members. If buy-in is not universal, do not proceed until it is.

The plan does not need to have all the details at the start. The plan should be amended as necessary and details fleshed out as they are understood. At the end of the project it becomes the best source of documentation as to the work done, the goals accomplished and the team effort.

Can anyone guarantee success?

Do the above principles guarantee success? Of course not. Life has a way of “pitching leaders high and tight, followed by sliders and curveballs.” However, by following your plan and these guidelines, you will maximize the opportunity for success.

Leaders are adaptable, flexible, forgiving and realistic. Be positive, give the best you have to offer and follow your plan!