

## 5 Strategies to Maximize Leadership Effectiveness

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There are many factors over which leaders have no control in today's workplace, but can still dramatically impact their effectiveness. With this in mind, it is prudent for them to consider some strategies for dealing with things that are within their span of control. The following are five strategies employed by successful leaders in a variety of industries.

**1. Communicate, communicate, communicate.** No other strategy leads to more success than effective, ongoing and positive communication. Effective leaders recognize this and strive to open every possible avenue of communication. Tell others what you are thinking, what you like and don't like, what you expect, and what needs to be done. Also provide feedback on how you perceive their performance and offer suggestions for improvement. This does not mean that you should tell people how to do things. That might stifle creativity and lead to resentment and lowered self-esteem in others.

A big mistake that many leaders make is withholding information from others. This causes problems in task accomplishment and in succession planning activities. To avoid this, constantly arrange to share your vision with others throughout the organization. Some strategies for doing this include one-on-one meetings with management and peers, regular employee forums where you personally answer questions for frontline employees, newsletters, technology based tools (e.g. intranet, internet, blogs tweets and wikis), and any other method that you can find.

**2. Maintain high personal ethical standards.** News sources are full of the ongoing unethical and illegal activities of leaders in reputable organizations. Their actions or inactions bring disgrace and negative attention to them and their organizations and raises skepticism about all professionals who occupy similar positions in other organizations.

A lowered level of professional values seems to exist in the workplace today. The result is that many leaders no longer seem to see activities that are questionable as something to avoid. Diverting corporate funds, cutting corners on quality, lying to employees, customers and shareholders, withholding pertinent information from others and other similar unethical activities are more common than ever.

Successful leaders not only avoid such behaviors, but also severely punish those who engage in them. This means telling the truth, owning up to mistakes, apologizing when you or your organization makes a mistake, and generally conducting yourself in a manner befitting one in whom corporate and organizational trust has been placed.

**3. Turn negatives into opportunities.** Napoleon Hill, noted author of one of the bestselling books on personal achievement -- *Think and Grow Rich* -- once stated "people are free to believe what they want to believe" This simple, powerful concept can allow any leader to achieve virtually any goal. If you can dream it, you should be able to accomplish it in some form. The key is to recognize what needs to be done, set attainable goals and set about accomplishing the objectives. Another important element of this strategy is to always look for opportunity in adversity. History is replete with examples of how successful people failed numerous times before reaching their final goal (e.g. Alexander Graham Bell, Nelson Mandela, and Winston Churchill). Successful leaders do not accept defeat. Instead, when something does not go as planned, they step back, re-evaluate, rethink the situation, and move forward again until they become successful.

**4. Look out for those in your charge.** I often encourage managers and leaders in my workshops to subscribe to an adapted approach that hair product mogul Vidal Sassoon's touted in some of his early commercials --- "if they don't look good; you don't look good." In other words, successful leaders provide the tools, knowledge, support and whatever employees need to succeed. In doing so, the leader and the organization will ultimately succeed or look good.

Leaders who fail to adopt more proactive thinking often degrade or set their employees up for failure. This leads to such things as lack of trust, frustration and stress, reduced productivity, and higher turnover.

**5. Engage in lifelong learning.** One thing that a teacher told me when I was very young and that still holds true today is that “no one can ever take your education away from you.” Astute and successful leaders are ones who continually set and reset the bar for personal achievement in the area of continual learning. One essential area of learning involves staying abreast of current technology and applications for social media. You cannot effectively lead employees who are technically literate and maximize the potential of technology if you are not technically savvy.

Attending workshops, getting advanced degrees, gaining professional certifications, taking online and classroom courses, networking professionally, and reading professional publications are just some of the common ways to enhance ones knowledge and skills. In doing these things, leaders not only improve their own value, but also set a very powerful example for those around them.

While these proven simple suggestions will not resolve all the challenges that you face as a leader, they can certainly set the tone for more success in a variety of areas.

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