

Are you a magnetic leader?

By Heidi Alexandra Pollard

Leadership isn't just about getting others to buy into your vision and follow you. To become a true leader today you must understand the principles of servant leadership, focusing on the people in your team and encouraging and supporting each person to realize their full potential. It is only once you let go of your ego and learn to lead with your heart that you will become a truly magnetic leader.

Magnetic leaders encourage and support others to do better, to become more and be the best they can be resulting in success for the leader, their team and the organization. When you become such a leader everyone benefits – it's a win win and others will seek you out want to follow you because you add value to them.

Don't just teach them to fish

I know you've heard the saying before, haven't you - give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime – however if you want to become a successful magnetic leader you need to go one step further and teach them how to be a fisherman.

There's a lot more to great leadership than just managing people and getting the job done. Sure being a good manager, teaching people to fish and getting the job done can make you a success, but imagine the possibilities if you can do so through the willing support of others.

It's essential when you induct a new team member that you teach them how to do the job, the processes and procedures, so they can do their job successfully. When you teach someone to be a fisherman however, you help improve them as individuals. When you help them problem solve, encourage them and coach them to cultivate a positive attitude, that's servant leadership. When you support someone to improve a personal quality that will benefit them across all areas of their life, like people skills, that's servant leadership.

What I've found is that many managers and leaders don't have a service mindset. They expect their staff to seek their own development, be proactive and show initiative before they offer any additional development. Many of my executive coaching clients began with this mindset believing they had already invested enough just training the person to do the job they were hired for. And they think if they do any more for them that the staff member will get too skilled and leave for another opportunity at the earliest opportunity before they've seen a return on their investment.

Sure serving and developing your people in more than the necessary job skills is harder and more time consuming to do, but as all my executive coaching clients now testify – it is worth the price and they are reaping the rewards of loyal, highly motivated staff and seeing much higher dividends over the long term.

Developing your people is a long term strategy

While teaching your people the basics of their role is relatively quick and straightforward, developing the whole person requires change, change that takes time. Why? Because the core of a person themselves requires change – their beliefs, values and attitudes, not just their skills – and that kind of change can't be rushed.

In all my roles throughout my career I have made serving and developing my staff one of my highest priorities. Naturally, as a qualified coach I did some of it one on one. But in every leadership position I've had I've also committed budget to send people on training and personal development courses as well as coaching and mentoring over a longer period of time.

In addition I also encouraged monthly knowledge sharing both written and verbal on topics that would support their growth as leaders. Recently my management team and I dedicated a part of our managers meeting every fortnight to reviewing a chapter of a leadership book and discussing together how we could apply the knowledge in our own day to day work. I would often conduct activities, teach a lesson or ask them to do homework between meetings. Basically I leveraged my own skills, strengths and passions and gave the development moments my own unique spin.

Did the managers participate? Absolutely.

Did they like it? Most of the time, but not always.

Did they appreciate the value of continual and never ending improvement? Of course.

Was I putting myself out on a limb and being vulnerable. Indeed.

But in doing so was I also improving and developing myself? Definitely.

In order to develop your people, you must be prepared to keep growing yourself.

So what are you going to do to serve and add value to your staff?

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