

Great Companies Grow Their Leaders

By Heidi Alexandra Pollard

We live in an interesting world, don't we?

Companies it seems, are rising and falling faster than ever before. Technology, globalization and the speed of communication has totally changed the workplace environment.

Yet even in these fickle times, some companies and brands endure. More than that, they thrive and excel. They innovate and set the pace of change.

What makes them so successful?

The difference I believe is their leadership and communication style. Great companies effectively communicate and grow their leaders faster than their competition and the speed of change.

So what does this mean for you and your company? It means communicating carefully, transparently and frequently. Staff and stakeholders want to know the truth and can find out information quickly and from many sources.

Your role as a leader is to understand that everything you say and do communicates something - including what you're NOT saying.

Growing effective leaders who communicate effectively in your organization will take commitment and a clear, simple strategy. Here are three simple strategies for growing great leaders and generating smooth communication in your organization:

Strategy 1 - Do everything possible to challenge, grow and stimulate up and coming talent. Whether it's giving them special projects, assigning them to new divisions or investing in their management, operational, marketing and leadership training.

Strategy 2 - Find other senior leaders inside or outside your company to mentor your potential leaders. This will expose your talent to leadership thinking and behaviour. Every elite athlete has a strong coach behind them holding them accountable and keeping them on track - treat your talent like an athlete in training.

Strategy 3 - Teach your future leaders how to communicate with clarity and power. Encourage your managers to use a coach approach in their dealings with staff. Challenge them to ask questions and listen more than just telling people what to do. Show them that connection, rapport and ongoing dialogue can create connection, commitment and results.

Effective communication relies on relationships and understanding your own and others communications style. Many tools can assist your company leaders to learn how to create a safe way to discuss communication styles such as DISC, MBTI and the PCSI©. I regularly use MBTI and the PCSI© in workshops and training as well as one on one with my clients to assist with understanding and improving communication and teamwork.

Leaders often find themselves in situations where they don't have all the information, experience or skills that they need. While many managers will wait until they have a complete picture before communicating, waiting to communicate can often be the worst thing to do.

Clients often say to me: "As the manager it is up to me to have all the answers. I would rather wait until I have all the information than look like I don't know what I am talking about."

In situations like this I use a coach approach to help them challenge this assumption and to discover when is best to communicate. By prompting them to dig deeper, they often realize that staff and stakeholders don't expect them to have all the answers all the time and are usually satisfied with hearing honest communication about what is known which can also build trust.

Importantly I encourage clients to be confident in saying "I don't know," if they don't or "I don't have that information right now but will go away and find out." People understand that you may not know it all and they'll appreciate you being upfront and telling them if not now, when you may know.

As a leader you can teach others in your company by painting a picture of the modern day business communication landscape. That is, help them to see that if they don't fill the information void with their own key messages, someone else will.

Blogs, wikis and discussion forums mean information is circling the globe constantly whether your leaders are part of that information flow or not. It is important that they can identify their stakeholder and staff needs and communicate about them consistently.

In a day and age where information is constantly flowing, your company leaders can be instrumental in making sure staff and stakeholders feel informed and stay focused on what's important. Make your company great by growing your emerging leaders.

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