

WHAT WE'RE READING...***The Leadership Challenge, 4th Edition***

Armed with more than 25 years of research, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, Ph.D., authors of *The Leadership Challenge*, have found that the characteristics of "personal best leadership experiences" have remained the same over time. So while the world and situations in which leaders lead have evolved, the *content* of leadership has endured.

Examples of exemplary leadership come from every industry, from nonprofit organizations and for-profit enterprises, from every region and walk of life. Leaders are women and men, young and old, employees and volunteers. Examples of exemplary leadership are found everywhere.

Over the two-and-a-half decades of their research, they have uncovered the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership that they discuss in detail in *The Leadership Challenge, 4th Ed.* A synopsis of what the best leaders share in the process of leading:

Exemplary Leaders Model the Way

- Leadership is not about personality; it's about behavior.
- Titles are granted, but it's your behavior that wins respect.
- Leaders must forge agreement around common principles and common ideas.
- Leaders' deeds are far more important than their words when one wants to determine how serious leaders are about what they say.
- There is power in spending time with someone, of working side by side with colleagues, of telling stories that made values come alive, of being highly visible during times of uncertainty, and of asking questions to get people to think about values and priorities.
- People follow first the person, then the plan.

Exemplary Leaders Inspire a Shared Vision

- Leaders envision exciting and ennobling possibilities.
- A person with no constituents is not a leader, and people will not follow until they accept a vision as their own.
- Leaders cannot command commitment, only *inspire* it.
- People must believe that leaders understand their needs and have their interests at heart.

Exemplary Leaders Challenge the Process

- Leaders venture out. None of the individuals studied sat idly by waiting for fate to smile upon them.
- When it comes to innovation, the leader's major contributions are in the creation of a climate for experimentation, the recognition of good ideas, the support of those ideas, and the willingness to challenge the system to get new products, services, and systems adopted.
- Leaders must pay attention to the capacity of their constituents to take control of challenging situations and become fully committed to change. You can't exhort people to take risks if they don't also feel safe.
- "Try, fail, learn." is the leader's mantra.

EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP

It's about leadership that creates the climate in which people turn challenging opportunities into remarkable successes.

from *The Leadership Challenge*
4th Edition
Kouzes and Posner

Exemplary Leaders Enable Others to Act

- Leaders make it possible for others to do good work.
- They know that those who are expected to produce the results must feel a sense of personal power and ownership.
- Leaders understand that the command-and-control techniques of traditional management no longer apply.
- Instead, leaders work to make people feel strong, capable, and committed.
- Leaders enable others to act not by hoarding the power they have but by giving it away.
- Exemplary leaders strengthen everyone's capacity to deliver on the promises they make.

Exemplary Leaders Encourage the Heart

- Genuine acts of caring uplift the spirits and draw people forward.
- Leaders want to provide a climate in which people feel cared about and genuinely appreciated by their leaders.
- It's part of the leader's job to show appreciation for people's contributions and to create a culture of celebrating values and victories.
- Leaders make sure people see the benefit of behavior that's aligned with cherished values.
- Leaders also know that celebrations and rituals, when done with authenticity and from the heart, build a strong sense of collective identity and community spirit that can carry a group through extraordinarily tough times.

Self-Evaluation

Where are you as a leader on living the Five Practices or Exemplary Leadership? What can you do today to have your team experience your "personal-best leadership?"

- When you leave your current position, what legacy do you want to leave behind? Are you modeling now what you want to be known for later?
- What inspires you? Gives you passion? What would inspire your constituents? In what ways are you working together to create the vision for your organization?
- What is standing in the way of reaching your vision? What processes, systems, relationships, etc., can you challenge to remove just one barrier? A second?
- In what specific ways will making others feel powerful and creating a culture of teamwork benefit your organization? How will outcomes be different, improved?
- How are you recognizing individual achievement and contributions to your organization's mission and vision? How do you celebrate team or organizational wins?

SHARED PASSION

*Vision trumps everything.
Organizations are most
effective when a well-
articulated and ambitious
vision of the future exists.*

from *The Leadership Challenge*
4th Edition
Kouzes and Posner