



Excel Leader Advisory Letter

ISSUED BY THE EXCEL LEADERSHIP GROUP

October 2008

Excel's Mission Statement

We help executives create and sustain a high performance, values-based culture that fully engages the talents of all associates to consistently deliver world-class results and achieve higher profits.

Thought for October

"Accomplishing tasks through people" is a different paradigm than "building people through the accomplishment of tasks." With one, you get things done. With the other, you get them done with far greater creativity, synergy, and effectiveness... and in the process, you build the capacity to do more in the future as well.

-Stephen R. Covey



Last month, I discussed the important connection between effective leadership, an organization's work culture and profitability. I also concluded that the main lesson that executives should take away is that effective leaders create high performance cultures which in turn produce better results and higher profits. Therefore, prudent executives would do well to place significant emphasis and resources on the recruitment and development of their leadership teams in order to improve their bottom lines and secure a competitive advantage in today's global economy.

This month, I would like to begin looking at the primary characteristics which make these effective leaders "extraordinary" in terms of results achieved for their organizations. The first and certainly the most important trait or characteristic of an "extraordinary" leader is high integrity. I once heard integrity defined as "doing the right thing, even when no one is looking". I really like that simple but straightforward definition. It also implies that integrity is born of character; and character, in turn, is defined by a person's willingness to keep commitments and build trust. People need to be able to trust or believe in their leader, which implies that the leaders in turn must be believable or credible. Put another way, people want to be able to trust and have confidence in their leaders.

Perhaps one way to drive home the criticality of this trait is to imagine for a moment the opposite or contrasting scenario where leaders lack integrity and are not trusted by those they lead. What are the results? Certainly, we can expect to find an atmosphere of doubt and suspicion. In other words, people will lack confidence in what leaders are telling them as the words don't match up with deeds. These leaders do not "walk their talk". They probably make promises or commitments and fail to follow through. They may even say one thing and do something quite different. This behavior creates a climate or culture in which people spend valuable time "second guessing" what the leaders really intend instead of focusing on achieving company goals and providing customer service. This focus, of course, is both misguided and inefficient.

Further underscoring these points, Author Stephen M.R. Covey, in his book [The Speed of Trust](#), he talks about the need for leaders to be more transparent in order to build trust. This is particularly true if there has been a breach of trust between leaders and followers or the company and its customers. In other words, if an error has been made or a commitment not met, effective leaders exhibit transparency by opening up and admitting mistakes more openly. One can only ask how much of today's financial crisis could have been avoided if leaders had been a bit more transparent.

What affect does this have on organizations and profits? Trust and transparency mean that critical agreements can be reached and employee buy-in can be secured much faster, and speed can often mean higher productivity and lower cost. Less precious time and focus is spent on doubt and suspicion

and more time invested in achieving goals and satisfying customers...results that, as we talked about last month, positively impact any organization's bottom line.

Next month, we will review another critical characteristic or trait of effective leadership.

As always, I encourage readers to contact me anytime at mike@excelleadership.net with your comments and questions. Have a great month and we'll talk to you in November. Best regards.

Join our Web-based "community" devoted to open and honest discussions on topics related to leadership challenges and solutions. To join, simply visit TheExcelLeadershipGroup.net and click on "Community."



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