

Closing the Leadership Gap

By Catherine Armstrong

On the day of the wedding, the young bride gave the rings to her future

Mother-in-law and asked her to take them to the church because the “best man will just lose them”. Shortly after, the groom spoke to his friend, the best man. “I know that you can handle this buddy and I know that you won’t let me down. You take the rings to the church.” The best man looked concerned as he put the rings in his pocket. During the wedding ceremony, it was time to produce the rings. With a look of pride, the best man reached into his pocket, pulled out the rings and placed them in the hand of his friend.

The young groom showed leadership that day. He **challenged** his best man to step up and **take responsibility for his position**. He **showed faith** in his friend and **encouraged** him to take on the duties of his role. And he **took a risk** (because heaven knows what the bride would have done if the rings were lost!)

Have you seen someone in your organization show leadership at a time when you didn’t expect it? Are you taking on a leadership role or encouraging a new leader in your company?

With the fast pace of change in organizations, people are hungry for leaders to show them the way and help them move towards the future. The most effective companies develop strategies to encourage leadership at all levels of the organization.

There are many definitions of leadership, however it seems clear that leaders influence others, take the initiative to get things done and lead by example. Effective leaders stick to objectives even in the face of disappointment. At the same time they recognize that there are times when they need to be flexible and times when they need to change an unproductive course.

There are no tricks to becoming a leader; leaders are made through practice, recognition and encouragement.

The role of leader is to enhance, transform, coach, care, trust, and cheerlead.”

Tom Peters and
Nancy Austin
Management
Consultants

Here are four steps you can take to develop leaders in your organization

- 1) Notice members of your team who are showing leadership traits.** Be open to looking beyond titles and job descriptions. **Some leadership traits to watch for:** taking risks, showing consistent commitment to business objectives, resolving issues and problems, demonstrating courage in making unpopular decisions, willing to change, willing to make mistakes.
- 2) Show sincere and consistent appreciation when you observe a team member demonstrate leadership abilities.**
- 3) Care about team members as individuals.** Not everyone has the skills or the desire to be the visible leader at the top. We need leaders who will be in front leading the way and showing the vision. We also need leaders in the middle, supporting those in front and helping people work through difficulties. And we need leaders on the front line, gathering up the stragglers and helping those who are challenged by change.
- 4) Encourage and support the individual's growth and development.** If developing leaders are to take risks, failure is vital and inevitable. Make it safe to make mistakes. Support them as they work to solve problems and resolve issues.

Progressive companies don't just solve today's problems. They consistently look for opportunities to develop greater strengths in employees for the future.



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Catherine's down-to-earth and knowledgeable style has helped business leaders improve productivity, find solutions to conflict and problems and increase customer satisfaction. Catherine can be reached at Catherine.Armstrong@telus.net