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Leadership Essentials

No matter the client, I'm continually reminded of the critical importance of leadership. If you have to choose between leadership skills and prior work experience / technical skills, undoubtedly, leadership skills must win the day. My clients with exceptional leaders outperform the rest - every time.

So, what could be more important than discussing leadership essentials? In my 20+ years of experience as an entrepreneur, business consultant and business executive (and thanks to my HR mentor), I've uncovered the top leadership essentials required for long-term success. 1) Integrity. 2) Vision. 3) Communication. 4) Performance management

1. **Integrity** - It's vital to start with integrity. Without integrity, none of the other essentials matter. A year or two ago, I did a survey of a dozen business executives on keys to success. I was surprised that every successful executive included integrity on the list. You don't typically see this in popular business books or discussed at conferences yet it was one of the only essentials in common among the best leaders. Take note of the importance as there is no way to "train" or provide experiences to build integrity.
2. **Vision** - People follow those with vision. Enough said. How do you know if someone has vision? Do they seem to be confident about where they are headed? Do they share where the company is headed? Why it's headed there? Do they seem passionate about it? If so, you've found a leader with vision.
3. **Communication** - If there is something in common across almost every client, it is the feedback of the lack of robust communication. Communication is bedrock to success. For example, if your team doesn't know where they are headed, why they are headed there, how each person matters etc.; do you think they'll be interested? I doubt it. Do you provide upfront communication? That's not nearly as easy as it sounds. Do you make sure to ask for feedback? Do you continually clarify plans? Do you keep people in the loop? Communication alone can be a full-time job!
4. **Performance management** - Typically I try to limit my key points to three; however performance management cannot be forgotten. Assuming integrity is intact, those leaders who partner with employees to set goals, provide ongoing feedback, celebrate successes, track progress, and provide career planning advice will leapfrog those who don't every time. The biggest roadblock I hear consistently is the lack of time. What could be more important? Make it a priority.

Not only will solid leaders never go out of style but they are also critical to achieving bottom line business results. Start by making leadership a priority. Without it, you might as well hang up your hat.

Lisa's Tips: Relationships

As my loyal readers know, I believe relationships are the 80/20 of success. Thus a few tips might come in handy:

1. **Prioritize** - As much as we'd all like to do everything for everyone equally, it is impossible. Instead of trying and failing, prioritize - and don't commit to more than you can accomplish.
2. **Value** - remember to value those key relationships you might take for granted. Start there instead of making them an afterthought.
3. **Nurture** - How can you provide value to your relationships? No matter your level of expertise or # of contacts, you can provide value. Think out of the box.
4. **Tailor** - Not everyone appreciates the same things. Find out what matters to your key relationships. Change your approach to what works for them.
5. **Focus** - Even when we understand the importance of relationships, life can get in the way. 1 last email. 1 last phone call. 1 last issue. And the list goes on. Instead, make time to focus on your relationships.

Recommended Reading

A summer treat..... why not pick up a Lisa Gardner, Tami Hoag, or a Lee Child novel (can you believe Tom Cruise will play Jack Reacher?!?.....it will be interesting).

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