

Five Essentials of Leadership

BY PAUL VITALE



What is leadership? Leadership is the process in which one person enlists the aid and support of others to accomplish a task. In any such

endeavor, individuals with different strengths and backgrounds are propelled into leadership roles, either by choice or necessity. While some people may have exhibited leadership qualities from a very early age, others come to the role less naturally.

In her article “Can You Teach Leadership: Confronting Conventional Thought,” Melissa Vokoun questions if anyone can become a leader. She writes that conventional thought holds that leadership qualities are mostly born but notes that, in today’s business environment, the generally held belief is that anyone, if given the right opportunity, can become an effective leader.

Tourism professionals who are called into a position of guiding others have a significant amount of influence, which can be positive or negative. With this in mind, let’s take a moment to consider the behaviors, mindsets and practices that are part of effective and powerful leadership.

1) Have a servant’s heart

Exemplary leaders possess a genuine interest in mankind. Robert K. Greenleaf, who published the essay “The Servant



Paul Vitale is part of the seminar lineup at Contact, NTA’s new business-builder event that will debut in Newport, Rhode Island, Aug. 1-3.

as Leader” in 1970, said, “Good leaders must first become good servants.”

A selfless leader always leaves an unforgettable mark by recognizing the needs of those entrusted to his or her guidance. He or she sees the larger picture, unencumbered by the need for personal recognition and understands that the very heart of leadership is its goal itself. I have always considered a quality leader as one who does a little more than what is expected not every once in a while, but all the time.

2) Ignite eagerness in others

Those called to lead charges, both large and small, contribute to the amount of hope and inspiration others possess. By assessing and defining reality, outlining priorities, incorporating alternative points of view, and radiating positive energy, effective leaders create the environment of possibility. They create and sustain the energy that moves others toward accomplishment.

3) Reinvent tendencies and techniques

Simply put, setbacks can be setups for enormous growth. This is the way I’ve approached many of my own life’s growth spurts over the years. The opportunity to reformulate trends and methods always will be part of the DNA of leadership. Those who not only survive but thrive throughout the reinvention process are resilient during setbacks, admit mistakes while learning lessons, and act boldly and decisively when making adjustments. They react promptly and give themselves permission to change for the better, while recognizing that there is a good chance they are their toughest critics. By accepting that a setback can be the impetus for setting a new trail ablaze, professionals have the ability to affect exciting alternatives to accepted systems.

4) Possess a courageous attitude

Charles Kiefer, president of Innovation Associates, the firm that helped pioneer the body of concepts and methods now called organizational learning, once said,

“Leadership is what the rest of us call it when we see someone doing something they love, and we want to help.”

Exemplary leaders not only are the recipients of that help, but they delight in knowing that their team members feel as though they themselves led the way in getting the job done. It takes a great deal of confidence to rise to the occasion of leading others toward accomplishment.

A question to consider is: “Do I have the courage to not only inspire others to carry on during difficult times but also to keep myself learning, developing and refining the practices that exemplify quality leadership?”

5) Be consistent in action

Those who lead legendarily are internally authentic and externally consistent. Not only do they speak it, they live it; and not just every now and then. With consistency comes respect, with respect comes trust, and with trust comes the privilege to lead.

It is so important to remember that those who are called into a position of guiding others have an incredible amount of influence, either positive or negative. And through that influence, people can be inspired to accomplish as much or as little as they see being modeled along the way.

Approach the ideas of others with an open mind, encourage steady streams of dialogue, applaud team members for a job well done and become a champion for a cohesive team approach. When others witness actions that are fair and steady coupled with a poised attitude, positive results increase, morale elevates, and greater success and achievement are within reach.

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