

Outstanding Leading Role

Greatness, not just goodness, is needed in our leaders

by John A. Vardallas, CAE, CUDE

With all the recent events unfolding in the American business and political sectors, perhaps the most concerning isn't the competency of leadership, but rather its ethics. The economic inequality in America is being blamed by the greed of corporate leadership!

What makes leadership has always sparked interesting discussion. Are leaders born with innate qualities or can effective leadership be taught and learned? This is a very important business issue since recent American employee surveys indicate that half of workers are unhappy because of "not being valued" due to weak organizational leadership.

Are you as good a leader as you think you are? If so, how would your people rate you on some of the following traits or characteristics of effective CEOs. Are you perceived as great – or just good?

- A powerful business and people acumen
- An embracing of diversity
- The ability to inspire (not motivate) people to achieve
- A clear vision of seeing the possibilities and the preferred future for your organization
- The ability to build partnerships and alliances
- Being servant leaders to your customers/members
- A curiosity about the world and a facilitator of change
- Leading more by actions than words
- The ability to use technology to achieve business results
- A risk taker who doesn't fear innovation or failure
- The ability to convert the learning of ideas into practice
- The willingness to hire to your weakness
- The ability to develop goals and execute plans, and
- A developer of people – a human horticulturalist.

Strive for greatness

I offer the following action steps to inspire you to strive for greatness, not just goodness, in your leadership practices:

FOCUSING ON MORE INNOVATION AND LESS TRADITION IS THE NEW NORM. LEADERSHIP, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS MUST NOT WORK DEFENSIVELY, FEAR CHANGE OR BE AFRAID TO FAIL IN MOVING YOUR ASSOCIATION IN NEW DIRECTIONS.

1. Have a passion for your business philosophy in what you do for your association staff, board, members, customers and the community. Leaders inspire all through their passion for what they do for their constituencies. Being a servant leader means understanding and empathizing with all who surround you and serve.
2. Get the right folks in the right seats on your association bus and give them a license to pursue their passion in serving members. Having competent and knowledgeable people who can perform at their highest ability in a creative culture with parameters set by leadership will serve your members well. If leadership sets the right vision and direction tone for your organization, your people will drive the association to new heights.
3. Greatness knows that embracing innovation is not an option and great leaders know that if you are not changing you are dying. Focusing on more innovation and less tradition is the new norm. Leadership, staff and volunteers must not work defensively, fear change or be afraid to fail in moving your association in new directions. The road to success will be paved with some failure that should be looked upon as a prerequisite for successful change.

Great – not just good leadership – will be one of the key factors of how the success of associations will be measured in the future. And, how current leaders set a standard to follow and having the will to follow it may be their most important legacy.

I hope your leadership practices are anchored and reflect the core values of your association that will guide your business conduct and inspire greatness in you and your people during this uncertain and challenging economic time in America. ■



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