
Leadership and Collaboration

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How many times have you completed reading a biography or magazine story describing the unique accomplishments of some of the great leaders of our time—whether it be on Lee Iacocca in business or John Kennedy in politics—and come to the conclusion that these individuals seemed to have entered the world with some form of magic touch--that somehow their future leadership role was preordained?

It's just not so—it's simply not that easy.

The truth is that **leadership is learned**. Admittedly, it's not always an easy task as there are no simple formula cards or patents which automatically lead us to a successful leadership style. Quite to the contrary, leadership is a deeply human process, which develops over time through trial and error, victories and defeats, intuition and insight.

However, because personal leadership is such an important attribute to our continuing success, I'd like to share what I believe leadership should look like to all of us.

First, it's important to be clear on the profound differences between management and leadership—as there is a key role for both—but they are indeed very different.

In simplest terms, managers can be thought of as people who do things right, while leaders are people who do the right thing. The difference may be summarized as activities of mastering routines—or efficiency versus activities of vision, judgment and effectiveness.

First and foremost—**strong personal leadership begins with a strong personal vision**—helping to focus others on what future success looks like. Vision grabs, inspires, and can bring about a unique confidence in others. It can instill a belief that “Whatever it will take to deliver” can be achieved.

Following this, —The leader's role is to stay the course and provide a constancy of focus which will enable individuals to work the plan once they've planned their work.

Our vision has been very clear. We must be executing every aspect of our Game Plan with a level of excellence which sets new standards for the total company. mind you...this is no small feat.

However, as important as personal leadership is, it alone is not enough to beat competition and ultimately “win” in the marketplace. **Collaboration must also be operative and valued.**

Gone are the days when an individual or function can win independently of others in the company. The complexity of today's environment demands that we understand the broad workings of the business, and think of the total system as we develop and execute our plans. Managing the luggage business through inter-disciplinary teams provides us with a means to break down historical barriers which have prevented people from becoming aligned for maximum business focus. In very real terms, these teams create the opportunity to multiply the impact of individuals with functional expertise into an even greater whole.

As we move ahead in our journey, I believe the need for strong personal leadership and effective team collaboration will become even more important to winning big in the marketplace.

In my mind, teams should go well beyond a simple change to our organizational structure. They should become the “essence” of our culture, our way of life, and a real source of competitive advantage. We must identify the right balance between functional mastery and the power of team alignment to accomplish complementary goals.

On the other hand, it is important to note that team “success” stories do not in any way diminish the value of the individual or personal functional expertise.

To the contrary, this new way of operating should simply provide additional “top spin” to each individual’s personal contribution to the business. Creating a multi-discipline approach should facilitate networking with key team resources, and help foster necessary alignment.

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Our competition across each of our categories is becoming increasingly fierce, and ever more sophisticated. Similar developments are occurring among our key trade customers, who, through business consolidation and advanced technology, are becoming a much more challenging power base.

In this environment, personal leadership and collaborative skills can and will make the difference for all of us.

In sum, to win you must:

Get clear on your personal vision: Know what success will uniquely look like for your area of expertise.

Stay the course: Build alignment—find success.

Passionately share it with others: Inspire them!

The business will then grow: You will also grow.

Most important: I know you’ll have fun!!

A Leader

- Chooses to do the right things
- Has vision
- Looks at the wholistic outcome
- Chooses the “whats”
- Inspires
- Establishes standards of excellence and cultural values
- Seeks and achieves organizational ownership and commitment
- Is the process owner

A Manager

- Strives to do things “right”
- Is executionally focused—builds on the pre-established whats
- Participates in the process—typically is not the architect of the process

To Advance from a Manager to a Leader

1. Master basic skills first
2. Build interpersonal skills
3. Gain alignment and become skilled in working out win/win agreements
4. Develop effective listening and problem solving skills
5. Observe and learn skills from current leaders
6. Be willing to take on the mantel of leadership
7. Learn how to operate within the Samsonite system