



Building A Leader

I was talking to the President of a large operation about six months ago. We talked about his grandson who was just entering the family business. He was concerned about the young man's timidity and lack of "leadership" with those around him. The President was concerned that his grandson was too "nice" and couldn't be trusted to fire someone or hire the "right" person as opposed to the "nicest". He felt he seemed "soft". He's everyone's best friend he said. The President was worried about the long-term effect of his grandson's popularity at the expense of leadership.

My response was dished from two plates. The first was questioning his definition of leadership. Does a leader need to be the biggest a - hole at the company? Is that the path to great leadership?

Before he could answer that question, I took from another plate. Does his grandson follow orders from his current boss? Does his grandson excel in his current job title?

The president said "Yes, he's good at following orders and doing his current job!"

This young man is 21 years old, good enough at his job, he takes orders and is well liked, yet his grandfather wanted him to be a kick a - leader. I told the President to chill out (not my exact words). I told him that, considering his grandson's generation, he is light years ahead of his peers.

What students learn in high school hardly prepares them for the work force. Too many times what's expected is... procrastinate until the exam, then cram real hard, write the test and promptly drain what you learned from your mind by entertainment (games, party and play). These habits are further emphasized

while attending university or college. Students academically persevere to simply pass a test or get a diploma, thinking that their sacrifice is only short term; only till their exams are over.

In current classical education settings, students are not being prepared to be subservient. They are not taught that in the real-world people serve other people... and those who serve best are the most valuable. The most valuable people eventually (but not always) rise to the top of the company.

I've interviewed many (maybe too many) college grads who have shown little to no initiative in their career choice beyond their diploma/degree. I've asked if they know anything about this industry beyond what they learned in college... "nope" is the common answer. They know next to nothing about hard work or their need to understand the truth about their industry. They hardly even believe in truth. Too many believe that all views and opinions are to be tolerated. They are taught that their opinion is just as valid as their bosses or the customers. That is simply not true!

A great leader must first be a great follower. They must first be humble, so they can learn their job and customers well. Only once they understand the requirement for everyone to master serving one another can they rise in leadership. They should not rise in authority for their own benefit but for the benefit and health of the company. It's only when employees demonstrate their commitment and focus to the betterment of the company (through serving customers) that their value can be (or should be) appreciated and rewarded.

Demonstrating character and commitment to the company takes time; years or hopefully even decades. The longer, the better. It must be

tested daily, over as many various conflicts and circumstances as possible. True character and leadership can't be crammed into a one-hour exam.

The President's grandson was demonstrating character despite his "classical" education. As long as he keeps serving the customer he is learning the basics of serving the company well. Eventually he will see that there may be those who refuse to serve the customer, causing harm to the company or their employees. His concern for the customer will eventually teach him that hard choices need to be made. Slackers, for the good of the company and its customers must be let go.

I told my friend that he should have more patience with the development of his grandson but before that, he should be proud of him. He made it through school without drinking the entitlement cool-aid.

About the Author:

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