

Introduction to successfully lead an organization, whether it



Introduction

Synopsis

The video starts with the introduction of the guests present in the program.

The host, Charlie Rose gives a comprehensive coverage of some of the great achievements of both guests, Bill George and John Whitehead. He identifies them as leading business leaders with careers in key leadership positions spanning over four decades. Bill George is currently at Harvard Business School as professor of management practice. He was the chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Medtronic, well known as the leading company dealing with medical technology.

He is also the author of bestselling books on leadership. John C. Whitehead is a former US Navy officer where he was in charge of D-Day. He later joined the Goldman Sachs where he rose to the chairmanship position and later a Co-chairman. Whitehead also served in the US government's administration as Deputy Secretary of State.

He currently chairs the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation. The conversation then moves on to invite the insights about leadership from each of the guest's perspective. Before that, the host highlights the idea that a biography is a central part of every leader.

Discussion

Leadership Traits and Characteristics

Leadership has been a major concern over a long period of time in virtually all parts of the world. Outstanding leaders have existed since past

generations and they have exhibited specific characteristics and traits. Some people have always believed that great leaders are born and do not need any training on how to lead while other schools of thought are convinced that anyone can learn how to become a leader (George & Sims, 2007). The arguments presented can be used to justify the fact that both schools of thought are applicable. It is believed that leaders have common basic characteristics and traits which can be nurtured and altered as one develops depending on the various situations and encounters in life.

It is important to find and determine what qualities are found in great leaders but few have made attempts to investigate this. According to George (2007), an individual can decide to learn to become a leader by nurturing appropriate traits and characteristics of leadership. He argues that one has to develop the passion for leadership that is inborn.

Authentic leadership

The desire to successfully lead an organization, whether it is large or small, into achieving its mission and vision has proved to be one of the greatest challenges faced by leaders. Leadership means service and meeting all the needs of the stakeholders is not an easy task (Rose, 2007). With all these varied demands, leaders should exercise some reasonable degree of authenticity in order to remain focused on their vision for the entire organization. According to George (2007), a successful leader should be able to bring the best resources to the organization. Great corporations of the twenty-first-century are faced with complexities which can only be dealt with by exceptional leaders. Leadership demands purposefulness, integrity, and strong values that act as guiding principles in pushing an organization

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forward. Great leaders of organizations who demonstrate authenticity have been known to continue with the good dreams of their predecessors with the desire to leave longstanding legacies (George & Sims, 2007). Authenticity is about being the best one can be with inborn character development (George & Sims, 2007).

The greatest desire of an authentic leader is to genuinely serve and help organizations and the people through their leadership positions. They are not guided by selfish desires but instead seek to empower others with passion and compassion as well as their own intelligence. In his book, George and Sims point out that authentic leaders are not born that way but they nurture their natural leadership gifts to full potential (2007). Outstanding leaders are well aware of not only their natural abilities but also their weakness and strive to overcome them. Consistency and self-discipline are some of the key characteristics of authentic leaders and this helps in building confidence of the people in them and what they stand for.

Courage

Being courageous is one of the most important characteristic of any leader and keeps leaders focused on what they are determined to achieve.

A confident leader inspires those who are being led into action and remain committed to the course set by the leader (Whitehead, 2005). This trait is usually confused with arrogance which may be detrimental to the spirit of team work. A leader who is arrogant will always cause resentment among the team members.

Confidence should be exercised with a sense of humility.

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Listening

Listening is a very important skill for any successful leader (Rose, 2007). It involves hearing the speaker's words, understanding the message being conveyed and how it is important to the speaker, and being able to give appropriate feedback to the source. Listening is one of the earliest skills of communication to be learnt yet very few are able to master it (Rose, 2007).

There is a close a close relationship between effective listening and efficient leadership. Effective leadership entails proper communication and that is why listening becomes a crucial component. Good leaders communicate clearly and at the right time in order to enhance understanding. This shows that effective leadership involves keen listening and empathic attention to the speaker. According to Whitehead, leaders who listen promote positive relationship in a team and inspire a sense of trust (Taylor & McDonald, 2009). As it has already been mentioned, listening is a skill and therefore one has to learn. An effective listening maintains an encouraging eye contact with the speaker. Effective leaders ought not to seem to be in a hurry during any communication process since attention makes the speaker feel important.

Great leaders have also mastered the skill of asking questions in the course of communication, particularly when the speaker asks a question.

Responding to such questions and finding out more from the speaker implies a sense of interest and directed listening. Apart from asking questions, a good listener provides feedback based on the response from the speaker.

Acting on the response promotes mutual understanding between the parties.

Every successful leader, therefore, would want assure the people of his
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unwavering attention and listening is one way of ensuring this. One of the basic rules of effective communication is not to talk and listen at the same time (Whitehead, 2005).

Patience

Moreover, effective leadership in any field demands a number of virtues and characteristics. Great leaders have demonstrated that patience is another very central characteristic that must be cultivated.

Having held key and demanding leadership positions in the business sector and government departments, George and Whitehead agree that patience plays an important role in promoting relationships with employees and board members (Rose, 2007). In order to effectively achieve the goals and missions of any organization, leaders must exercise high degree patience so as to harmonize the often varied views, feelings, opinions and other preferences of the employees (George, McLean & Craig, 2008). According to Whitehead (2005), some exceptional situations may call for impatience in order to get things done but most astute leaders have come to realize that patience can help in meeting objectives.

In the conversion, Whitehead notes that making appropriate judgments depend on the situations which can help leaders achieve the acceptable degrees of tolerance and patience. He argues that some objectives do not have to be met instantly and hence patience from the side of the leader is paramount. Professional researchers have suggested that patience is multi-dimensional. Three facets of patience have been identified and they include; perspective, politics, and perseverance (the 3 P's). A leader who has

perspective is capable of making wise decisions as far as taking actions is concerned (Taylor & McDonald, 2009). Perspective ensures that a leader gets the entire picture of any situation as opposed to parochial considerations, concentration on matters that matter less. Effective leaders are able to see clearly into the future by creating a perspective. Every organization has its own politics and leaders have to be aware of what is going on in the environment.

This knowledge will guide the leader in making correct judgments about which projects and proposals need to be made (George et al., 2008). The third sub-virtue is persistence which involves continued presentation of suggestions which a leader is strongly convinced of its viability. Getting of approval for proposals and purchases from the responsible board may not be immediate and this is when persistence comes in.

Trust and Respect

Greatest leaders have reached great heights due to the trust and respect they command from their followers. Effective leaders have these two key characteristics and are able to execute their responsibilities with minimal difficulty. Being able to generate trust and respect does not imply that one is like as an individual but rather by consistency of actions.

Failure

Failure is very important in helping an individual to understand him or herself and to start on a higher note. Going through difficulties in life hardens a person to face challenges with a lot of determination. Many great leaders of the world have had significant instances of failure before they realized their

full potential (George & Sims, 2007). A real leader learns from the mistakes and challenges that he or she experiences.

Bill George points out that he lost a number of student elections while at college but that did not deter his desire to become the best he wanted to be (2007). Winston Churchill and Abraham Lincoln were able to face their challenges and they eventually overcame their demons (Rose, 2007). They both saw failures as learning opportunities rather than regarding them as the most unfortunate events to have ever happened in their lives. Over the past six dates, according to the guests, American leadership has changed significantly. They argue that leaders in America in the modern time are elected for the wrong reasons while the should-be-leaders are left out of the leadership path (George et al. , 2008).

Conclusion

The essay has discussed in detail the traits and characteristics of leadership. The conversation about leadership has brought out five major traits and characteristics of leadership. Authenticity, courage, listening skills, patience, and trust and respect have been elaborated from the view of the guests and other authors.

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