

MAFES Dawg Tracks

February 23, 2009 The Seven Traits of Effective Leaders



Although we all aren't managers, coordinators or superintendents, we all are leaders indirectly. This newsletter doesn't deal directly with safety issues, but with examples and leadership, two traits that everyone needs and should practice. By using these traits, good safety habits will follow. There is an old saying that reiterates the above statement. "Be careful how you live and what you do each day, you are an example for someone." Everyone influences someone, and much of the time it is someone we are familiar with. Often times, we don't realize that we might be influencing them.

According to management experts, no one can really determine if leaders are born with the natural traits of leadership or if they are they developed. Can one learn superior leadership skills? No one really knows for sure, but the experts say that they have noticed particular actions that are exhibited by highly effective leaders, regardless of what type of business environment that they may be in.

These seven actions are:

- **Make others feel important** – If your goals and decisions are self-centered, employees will lose their enthusiasm quickly. Emphasize their strengths and contributions, not your own.
- **Criticize others only in private** – Public praise for an exemplary act encourages others to excel, and it carries over to all employees. Criticizing an employee in public (in front of others) embarrasses and usually alienates them against the manager. Best management skills are to get the individual in private to correct the problem. It will help you to maintain their self-esteem and will enhance yours with the individual.
- **Make a game of competition** – Use competitive goals as a tool for accomplishing your goals. Reward the individuals or groups for achieving the project goals. Critique inefficiencies and celebrate accomplishments.

You are the leader and building them up will make you a stronger manager, as they will feel that they are a part of the team and will work to help you accomplish the project's goals.

"There is no I in teamwork!"

- **Promote a Vision** – Employees must know what you expect and have a clear vision of these goals. You have to give them a vision of what is expected of them and keep them informed of the progress toward these goals. It's our job to keep them duly informed.
- **Follow the Golden Rule** – Treat your employees just like you want to be treated. An abusive and non-diplomatic leader attracts very few employees. Lee Iacocca, former CEO of Daimler-Chrysler, stated that the mark of a good executive is "one that can tell you to go to hell and you will look forward to the trip."
- **Admit mistakes** – You can't hide your errors. Employees will sense this and either they lose respect or start to attempt to cover up their own mistakes. Obviously, both of these are bad. You know, morally, when management makes a mistake and gets it corrected the employees usually maintain their respect or gain a new found respect for them.
- **Stay close to the action** – A good leader or manager will be visible in the work area. Maintain a visible presence where the work is happening. The employees will know that you are "on top" of the action, and your presence enhances their respect for you and keeps you in the loop. There is very little respect gained from time spent in the office or away from the action.