



THE WORK OF LEADERSHIP

10 types of behaviour which distinguish leaders from non leaders

Warren Bennis, the well-known American writer on leadership, concluded that “most organisations are over-managed and under-led”. However, leadership will not flourish by itself, and some of the following pointers are the types of behaviour which distinguish leaders from non-leaders.

Direction: The fundamental job of any leader is to give people direction – something to move towards, to achieve, to become.

Vision: Ideally, the direction should be encapsulated in some form of vision which is the outcome of the process of strategic thinking which makes competitive and market sense. The aim of the vision is to unite people behind a common purpose, and therefore the simpler and more specific the vision the better.

Inspiring Followers: The vision must win hearts and minds, and therefore it must be presented in language and images that capture people’s imagination and appeals to their values and aspirations.

Selling the Vision: Telling people about the vision is not the same as selling the vision. Selling the vision is a continuous process which requires repetition if it is to win over people’s commitment.

Role Modelling: The leader and his team must then role model key behaviours that will be necessary to ensure the achievement of the vision.

Emotion: The leader must exhibit emotion and passion to energise others and encourage others to follow the vision with similar passion.

High Performance Expectations: A leader’s performance expectations of his team will set the upper limit on what is possible and extraordinary results will not arise from ordinary expectations.

Empowerment and Support: The leader must delegate, empower and support people in order to achieve the vision. Delegating means trusting people with authority to do their jobs. Empowering means removing all of the unnecessary bureaucratic nonsense, which confuses people, blurs the vision and slows up progress. Supporting people means coaching and helping them and providing appropriate feedback, recognition and reward.

Trust: The leader must build trust and to do this the leader must trust people and treat them as responsible adults.

Delivery: A leader must also take responsibility to deliver on results and deliver on the commitments which form part of the vision.

A useful summarising quotation on the work of leadership comes from Michael Useem, Professor of Management at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, who said that "leadership is at its best when the vision is strategic, the voice persuasive and the results tangible."