



Why Should I Follow You?

BY RANDY G. PENNINGTON

Strong, effective leadership is the intangible leverage that allows successful organizations and individuals to stand out in a world that's hungry for substance and difference.

So why should others follow you?

Leaders have two sources of power: their position and their relationships.

Positional power is exercised through fear or utility. Loyalty and performance are secured through either a threat of something undesirable or a transactional quid pro quo to provide a reward. The problem with positional power is that it lasts only as long as the leader has a viable means to incite fear or lavish rewards. Positional power ensures compliance ...at least for a while. And even that becomes suspect when followers have a choice.

Relationship power utilizes trust and credibility to build and sustain commitment. It inspires others to rise above difficult circumstances and environments. It creates a quiet confidence that challenges can and will be met.

Positional power simply makes you a manager. Relationship power makes you a leader who others are willing to follow.

Five C's of Great Leadership

Mastering these five areas is critical to your continued transformation:

Character: Our character – the pattern of our behavior and our moral constitution – defines us. It guides our approach for dealing with ourselves and others. Leaders with character make decisions based on what's right rather

than who's right and share credit rather than steal it. Leaders with character take responsibility and don't throw anyone under the bus or take advantage of them for the lure of expediency.

Competence: Would you take my advice on improving your golf swing? Trust me, as someone whose game has been described as ably mediocre, you shouldn't. On the other hand, a tip from a touring pro is priceless. The difference is competence. Leaders show a dedication to their craft and continually seek improvement. They never take their own performance for granted. Of course, you can influence without being an expert. But never underestimate the credibility that comes from competence demonstrated through certification and performance.

Communication: Outstanding presentation skills contribute to effective communication. Unfortunately, too much emphasis has been placed on the importance of managing the message through the spoken and written word. Communication that gives you street cred as a leader is about openness, transparency and understanding. We tend to trust and follow those who share appropriate information willingly, listen to and accept our ideas, and identify with our struggles, joys and environment.

Consistency: Have you ever worked for a jerk? Chances are that you learned to survive as long as that individual was consistent. Consistency creates confidence and allows others to predict our future performance and response. Consistency alone will not make you an effective leader. But combine it with character, competence and

communication, and you build a track record for effective leadership in good times and bad. Consistency frees others from worry about protecting themselves. And it marks the difference between occasional brilliance and unmistakable excellence.

Courage: Leadership in an increasingly competitive and demanding world requires courage. Barriers must be confronted head-on. Risks must be taken. Business as usual should be routinely and systematically challenged. New ideas must be encouraged, protected and developed. Every great innovation began as an idea that challenged conventional wisdom or extended prevailing thought to a place where someone was uncomfortable. A has-been or wanna-be will revel in the comfort of the status quo. But leaders strike out boldly in search of new solutions. And they never fall in love with a single idea or approach to such a degree that it restricts their ability to adapt and change.

You know what you need to do to improve your organization's performance. You know how you need to perform and behave to influence others through the power of trust and credibility. So now there's only thing missing - your answer to the question, "Why should I follow you?"

Randy Pennington is author of Results Rule! Build a Culture that Blows the Competition Away and On My Honor, I Will.. He helps leaders build cultures committed to results, relationships and accountability.

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