



Trudy Belanco

Question

How can I become a more effective leader?

Answer

Some of the difficulties that entrepreneurs encounter tend to revolve around people problems rather than skill deficiencies. Skills can be learned somewhat quickly, but behaviour tends to be ingrained from an early age and can be more difficult to modify.

Leaders of groups of people must constantly interact and influence others: motivating, coaching, listening, communicating, selling, and partnering. If you project an inconsistent image, explain poorly, fail to develop relationships, or make yourself psychologically or physically unavailable, managing is much more difficult.

You should consciously create the culture you want, using these practices:

- 1. Be available:** Make time for people, be approachable and give them your undivided attention.
- 2. Respect differences of opinion:** Accept the fact that others may not see things as you do. Be willing to listen and consider new ideas.
- 3. Empower your employees:** Delegate tasks and leadership roles and encourage your employees to solve problems. This demonstrates that you have confidence in their abilities. An empowered employee can lead to increased creativity, productivity, motivation, teamwork and loyalty.
- 4. Communicate Openly:** Hold regular staff meetings. Provide thorough expectations for all tasks to be completed. Be prepared to renegotiate expectations when you recognize changing circumstances. Don't just be right—be fair.
- 5. Express appreciation for jobs well done:** Words of praise and recognition encourage employees to continue to meet and exceed expectations. Be mindful of how each employee prefers to be rewarded. Some are comfortable with public recognition; others may prefer to be privately rewarded and recognized.

You are your company—as a leader, others take their cue from you. Your everyday image in conversation, actions and manner of presentation and your treatment of employees is a statement about your company. **BL**

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