

## Knowing Others: The More Difficult Aspect of Self-Leadership (Part 1)

"People leave managers not companies," authors Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman wrote. "So much money has been thrown at the challenge of keeping good people - in the form of better pay, better perks and better training - when, in the end, turnover is mostly a manager issue." If you have a turnover problem, look first at your managers. Are they driving people away?<sup>1</sup>

I suspect the same can be said of leaders. Hence it is important that leaders learn how to manage and motivate people. Before we can do that effectively, it is important that we know why and how people behave.

In other words, another key aspect of self-leadership is to be "Other-Awared." How well do we know our people?

Ask any leader, and he will tell you that one of the most difficult aspects of leadership is managing people. Why is leading people so difficult?

### 1 People are driven by contrasting values – They become conflictual.

Some people are difficult because they fundamentally embrace values that are different from their leaders. Values like people before program, honesty, fairness, hard work, ethical behaviors are important in leadership. But not all people are convinced of these values.

Aligning personal values with organization values is one of the greatest challenges in leadership. When staff members continuously clash with their leaders over core beliefs, they become a "thorn in the flesh" for the leaders.

### 2 People are driven by irritating work habits – They become exasperating.

We are creatures of habits. Sometime ago, a leader came to me and commented, "I have a manager who demands that the staple in the report must be exactly 0.5 cm left and top of the right hand corner. No matter how accurate and good the report maybe, if the staple is not in the right place, he will reject it and make his staff re-staple it!"

I thought to myself, "This habit tops it all. How anal retentive some people can be!" What irritating habits do our people have that make life in the workplace quite miserable? Do we know them?

Some of the other irksome habits include being too controlling, too suspicious, too pushy, too critical, or too nit-picky.

### 3 People are driven by mismatched, hidden, and unrealistic expectations – They become confused.

One of the causes of work conflict between leaders and followers is unclarified expectations. This is especially true in an ever-changing work environment, where demands and needs are changing regularly. Having a job description and KPIs in the beginning of the year is insufficient. This is because job scope and KPIs are moving targets.

People and leaders have mismatched expectations.

It is not uncommon to hear leaders and staff clashing over their respective expectations. "I thought you were supposed to do this." Then comes the reply, "No, I thought I am supposed to do that." Human resource specialists tell us that most of the conflicts in job description between leaders

and staff are due to mismatched expectations. One study indicates that 25% of our job scope is mismatched.

People have hidden expectations.

Some people expect their subordinates to work and behave a certain way. In conflict situations between managers and staff, I often ask, "Why don't you communicate these expectations to your staff?" They would smugly reply, "Why should I? They should know better. They should know how this organization works and how we work." Therein lies the problem.

People have unrealistic expectations.

We hear staff complain that leaders have unrealistic expectations. Stretched goals are important but continual inability to reach them can be demoralizing. Leaders need to decide on how far goals should be stretched and help staff reach these goals.

#### **4 People are driven by ineffectual communication patterns – They become irritants.**

Strong words and aggressive actions can infuriate people. Unable to control their emotions, some managers enjoy humiliating their staff publicly. According to some HR experts, of all the abuses, employees find public humiliation the most intolerable. This is especially painful in an Asian culture. A mega loss of face is felt when employees are dishonored and disrespected.

#### **5 People are driven by self-pity – They become cynical.**

Self-pity people agonize. The self-pity person's motto is a continuous, "If only..." As my colleague, Peter, poignantly writes, "Self-pity is the bedrock of human resentment. The self-pity person groans and moans, whines and pines and gropes for every morsel of excuse for their pitiful existence."

Those who grovel in self-pity feel they are the most misunderstood, most rejected, most neglected and most despised people in the world. Such complainers are hard to live with because they are self-rejecting. Many do not know how to respond to them.

As such, they then become cynical about many things in life, even about kind and positive initiatives and, especially about the leadership in their organizations.

Reading a list like this makes us realize that leading people is indeed difficult. How well do we know people? In my next issue, I will deal with other behavior drivers that make leading people difficult.

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Managing Self is one of the most difficult aspects in self-leadership. What are the areas that need self-management? Read ***Self-Management - The Control Leaders Need***.

Knowing yourself is an important aspect of self-leadership. Learn about what you need to know about yourself in ***Self-Awareness - The First Step in Self-Leadership***

Understanding self-leadership. Read all about it in ***Self Leadership – An Enigma Unfolds***

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<sup>i</sup> Buckingham, M. & Coffman, C. (2002). First Break All the Rules. Gallup Organization