

## 7 Questions to Ask Yourself to Confirm Your Leadership Success

It's no secret that leaders today must be able to balance many responsibilities and roles in their quest to succeed in business. Leaders are pulled in many different directions and can find themselves caught between what they need to do in order to create a winning team and keeping all their constituencies happy.

One of the big mistakes a leader can make is to believe the development of their team isn't their top priority. The best run companies are the ones that devote significant time and resources to developing the skill, values, beliefs and identity of their team. It is impossible for any single person to accomplish everything that must be done in order for a business to grow and prosper. That is where the team comes in. A leader with a strong team around them will see exponentially greater results than a leader with a mediocre team. There is no greater responsibility for a leader than to recruit, train, develop, coach, recognize and reward the people who are responsible for the success of the leader's business.

In order to make sure you are devoting the time and effort necessary to build a winning team ask yourself these seven questions and see how well you stack up. If you are strong in all these areas, then congratulations – you are well on your way to the highest levels of leadership success. If you still need to work on some or all of these areas, then make a commitment to yourself and your team to get started today.

**Does your team possess a clear understanding of your vision?** Many companies spend time developing a vision but only communicate it to the senior team. A vision is useless unless the people responsible for delivering it through the company's products and services know, understand and live the vision. As a leader, you must have a laser focus on your vision. You must communicate it to the team and then reinforce it through coaching, at meetings, and through your recognition and reward programs. People want to feel significant in the work they do. When they understand the company vision and how their job fits into it, they will feel connected and valued.

**Does your team have clear, specific, measurable goals that support the vision?** Once you communicate the vision and your team understands how their role fits into it, you must now make sure they have specific goals to measure their progress. The power of goals cannot be understated. Goals bring accountability to the team and allow the leader to measure how the team is doing in accomplishing the vision. It allows you to reward team members who contribute to the success of the team, and provide appropriate support to those who don't.

**Does the team understand the system of rewards and consequences?** Strong leadership requires that your team understand the consequences of their performance. Too many businesses fail to develop and communicate clear systems for handling team

performance. This is like a disease within the team. It destroys morale and creates mediocre performance because the team members begin to recognize that no matter how hard they work – or, for that matter, how little they achieve – they will be treated the same as everyone else. Why work harder or do more than expected if there is no consequence? Make sure the team understands there are consequences to not contributing to the team and consistently apply them.

**Do you pull the weeds when you need to?** Believe it or not, your team will respect you and perform better for you when you remove the weak members from the team – pull the weeds. Think about a garden of beautiful flowers and what happens when a weed shows up. The weed starts to grow and before you know it, it starts to choke off the flowers. More weeds grow and more flowers disappear.

The same is true on your team. If you have a team member that does not perform or creates conflict on the team, you must be willing to deal with it. Do not pretend it will get better or hope they choose to leave. One of the major mistakes leaders make is to let these non-performers pull the whole team down. The strong performers know who isn't performing and they will respect you more if you deal with it.

**Does your team receive regular communication, coaching and development?** Once you have communicated the vision, provided clear goals and communicated the consequences now you can kick back and take it easy, right? Of course not. Strong leaders are also great communicators and coaches. Your team will require regular communication as the business and environment change. Adjustments must be made to the strategy. The team must be kept abreast of updates and issues impacting their roles.

**Does your team fear the “F” word?** Teams that are in fear of failure in their day-to-day attempts to become better at their job will become paralyzed by that fear. They will fail to take action without first checking with you on even the most trivial point. Winning teams are willing to do what it takes to get the job done and will take reasonable business risks.

As a leader, you must support this risk taking. Trust your hiring decisions and your coaching talents and let them do their job with minimal interference. If you and the team communicate regularly and you are coaching effectively, your level of risk will be minimal and their development will soar.

**Does your team trust you and respect you?** There is a saying in sales that if your customer likes you, trust you and believes you then, they will buy from you. The same is true in leadership. Understand that you are selling your team every day on what you need them to do and why they should do it. If your team does not trust you or respect you then they certainly will not buy what you are telling them. If you lose their trust and respect, it will be very hard to get it back and it will have a negative impact on their performance. Do what you say you will do – even if it is not popular.

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Be fair, honest and ethical in your dealings with them and they will follow your lead. Never compromise your ethics or tell your team simply what they want to hear. There are times when confidentiality will prohibit you sharing everything with them, but do not hold it over their head. Deal with them honestly and keep their trust – it will pay big dividends.

As a leader, your primary role is to create the strongest possible team you can. The more successful the team the more successful you will be. Many people say that your employees are your greatest asset. The truth is that it is the RIGHT people on your team, doing the RIGHT things, which are your greatest asset. Work harder on developing your team than on anything else – if you do then you will be successful.

To your success,  
Dennis