Three Qualities of Highly-Effective Leaders by Jimmie Flores

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I often use a quote from MSNBCâ€™s Chris Matthews: â€œTo become a meaningful participant, you must get a seat at the table.â€• It makes sense that we must take some level of risk, and do something to contribute to the success of our organization. In other words, standing on the sidelines will accomplish nothing. We must participate.

Here recently, I heard Matthews discuss the leadership qualities that he finds important. While his discussion focused on the current political candidates, the attributes are equally applicable to those of us in the business community.

Quality #1: Motive

Matthews was adamant that a great leader â€œmust stand for something.â€• What are you trying to accomplish? Where do you see a gap that you wish to bridge? How do you plan to make a difference? Until you can express to others why they should believe in you, nothing happens.

A leader is not a manager. The people who run the organization are far-sighted, continually focused on maximizing shareholderâ€™s wealth, opening new markets, and providing unparalleled customer support. A manager, on the other hand, takes a tactical approach. These individuals create processes, teach those steps to others, and perform quality checks. The leaders ensure that the processes are aligned with organizational strategy, which means they will yield long-term results.

Quality #2: Passion

Matthews states that passion in leaders is described as â€œwhat brings out the emotions, and what drives their spirit.â€• You must know what excites you, and what will keep you going even when obstacles arise. If you are easily discouraged when a challenge arises, you lack the passion for that activity, work, and even for your career success.

You must continually search for meaningful work. If you often awake before your alarm clock sounds because of your excitement to reach your office, you have passion for what you do. Passionate people have a difficult time accepting failure. Instead, they look for different angles, a unique perspective, and new ways to exploit opportunities.

Quality #3: Spontaneity

Matthews asks, â€œCan they react to a challenge or moment?â€• In other words, can you think on your feet? Are you prepared to make smart decisions without falling into the paralysis of analysis trap?

While process is important, we must embrace some level of risk. Itâ€™s foolish to believe that we must have all the facts before making a decision. We can expect to make mistakes, but the trick is to identify the error quickly. After the problem is resolved, you can conduct a lessons learned exercise, which focuses on what was done right, and what should be avoided.

Great leaders are committed to getting things done. Of course, these individuals build a talented staff, and are not threatened by them. The effort is on high-performance, and not who is going to receive the accolades.

Excelling in a leadership role requires that one have a reason to do well. Once we know what is

important, we must align our energy to realize the intended benefits. Given that problems will arise, the top-notch leader is agile, constantly taking corrective action to meet the organizational objectives. Finally, successful leaders are willing to share the wealth, understanding that it takes a competent team to realize the goals that are most important for the enterprise.

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Jimmie Flores - About Author:
Dr. Jimmie Flores,PhD,PMP,ITIL,SSBB,SPHR,GPHR is a seasoned organizational development and continuous improvement professional with 20 years of experience. In 2006, he founded the Flores Consulting Group, a company based in San Antonio, TX. Dr. Flores is also an expert in project management, ITIL, Six Sigma, Entrepreneurship, and Sports Officiating. Please visit our website at http://www.jmbok.com

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