



Inspire extraordinary performance in yourself and others

Cultivate Humility as a Characteristic of Your Leadership

Webster's Dictionary Definition

Webster's defines the word, humility as 1. "the quality or state of being humble". A short skip alphabetically, up the dictionary page, reveals that the word humble means "not proud or haughty; not arrogant or assertive". How does humility play a part in leadership contributions that endure? What role does humility play in the success of a leader?

Can a humble leader survive in the executive suite? Jim Collins, the author of Good to Great defines the highest level of effective leadership, a "Level 5 Executive as a leader who builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will". (Collins, p.21) The contrast is apparent when considering traditional, worldly views of humility in leadership. The traditional view of humility in leadership is that it is an action of giving up power that should be retained by the leader.

"Personal Humility" Applied

Personal humility flies in the face of pride and acknowledges that we are not the sole determinants of our successes, but that other factors contribute significantly to future outcomes. Leaders who are humble set aside their own need to succeed in favor of being part of an effort that surpasses what they could do on their own. Truly, the leader forgoes personal acclaim in favor of an opportunity to be a part of an enduring contribution within the organization and to its people. Personal humility points to the contributions of others and to things outside the leader's own control to explain successful outcomes.

The How-Do-I-Do-It of Personal Humility

Consider the following points and conduct an informal check-up to see where you as a leader fall on the scale of personal humility.

- Your own written and spoken words indicate your level of humility as a leader. Are your words expressing the value that you place on those around you? Top, successful leaders point out jobs well done, give credit when it is due and cheer their staff members on. Rather than grabbing the spotlight, an effective leader reflects praise to others whenever possible.
- Your actions are indicative of your effectiveness to lead others. Do both your team and peers find you approachable in good times as well as tough times? Can they count on you to be objective, purposeful and to encourage and provide support in difficult situations? Leaders with high personal humility accept responsibility for failure. In other words, "the buck really does stop" at the executive office suite. Blame is not deflected down the hall to another member of the team.

- The growth level of your team members indicates your willingness to invest in them personally. Are the members of your team growing under your leadership? How can you gauge their growth? Who among them is ready to "try their wings" in new situations? Are you ready to let them fly solo, outside of your control?
- Recruiting the best members for your team even those whose talents surpass your own is a sign of personal humility. Many times we tend to attract team members who are "junior" images of ourselves in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Can you successfully choose new team members with skills beyond yours and encourage them in their growth? Are you proactive in seeking team members whose talents complement your own?
- Listen to the way in which your peers and team members describe you to get a feel for how others perceive you. Does their description speak to your commitment to their continued growth? Are their words indicative of a leader who makes contributions that will endure? Check the Webster's definition listed above for the words humble and humility and use them as a barometer.

The Results that Make the Difference

Great leaders are cognizant of the impact that they can make through their actions. They go out of their way to invest in their employees, create an environment where truthful communication is welcomed and enable others to take risks responsibly. The payoff to the organization is that these efforts are multiplied over and over again throughout all organizational levels as the actions of an effective leader endure within the company.

Are you wondering how your boss, peers, and employees perceive you? The professionals at T Squared Leadership, LLC can prepare you to take your leadership to the next level. We utilize the industry's premier, confidential 360-degree assessment instruments to help executives learn how they are perceived by others. We also identify potential problem areas that can stall careers and train executives to use their strengths to overcome these issues.

We are dedicated to improving your leadership and business results. Contact us at (719) 359-5132 or tom@t2leadership.com for more information.

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