

SIX STEPS TO BEING AN EFFECTIVE L.E.A.D.E.R.

By: Vic Clevenger

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One night during World War II, General Patton and his troops were on the march through Europe preparing to set up an offensive against the enemy. It was all going as scheduled until they came to a river that had more resemblance to a dark, murky swamp of Louisiana than it did a river. After much thought and consideration of how to proceed, General Patton gave the order to cross this body of water and move ahead as strategically planned. But the unexpected occurred, when his men began to grumble and complain about the General's directive. They had no idea of what the waters held for them and were leery of the darkness, perhaps an ambush awaited. Once word of this reached the General's ears he did the unthinkable. He climbed out of the jeep in which he was riding, grabbed his rifle and headed to the front of the soldiers. Was he going there to chew them out or "motivate" them as only a general in the U.S. Army could? Once he reached the front of the troops he faced his men and told them to follow him. He then did an about face and began to walk into river with his rifle overhead and they all followed behind him.

Being a leader carries with it great responsibility and dedication. Just because a person has been promoted or wears a title does not guarantee they will be an effective leader. It takes more than the corner office and a great big desk and a name on it to be a leader. Being an effective leader takes time, effort and desire. Each of the following steps, although independent of the other they are each connected for effective leadership. Everyday brings new challenges and obstacles for you as a leader. It is how you prepare as you approach them that will determine your effectiveness.

Step 1: Listen to what is around you.

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This first step to being an effective leader is you must first be a listener. In the story above General Patton heard the concerns of his men. He then addressed them by being the first in the water. Listen to the concerns of those that are under your authority. They are on your front lines and are the first ones to interact with your customers. They have some great ideas that will make the company a better business. Listening to what is around you will enable you as the effective leader to make more informed decisions and displays loyalty to your co-workers.

Step 2: Enthusiastic leaders make work a joy.

The next step for the effective leader is enthusiasm. There is nothing worse than a leader who is not excited about being there. They come into the office lethargically barking out orders and the employees dread coming in each morning. Carolyn Kepcher in her book *Carolyn 101* wrote that if you get to the point that you no longer enjoy your job, stop coming in and find another place to work. The morale of the staff greatly depends on the enthusiasm of the one who leads them. If the leader is a negative person and lacks enthusiasm so will the staff. But if the leader is exciting and has a positive outlook, this disposition will make its way to the employees.

Step 3: Be a leader of Action

Step number three of becoming an effective leader is action. Indecision and a lack of action can destroy a department as well as a whole corporation. The effective leader must be a person of action. Too many times a situation arises within a department that requires immediate action but instead is swept under the carpet only to snowball out of control. An effective leader will quickly consider all options and the act upon the best

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one. Even though not every action is the right one, everyone knows that this leader is one of action.

Step 4: Delegation is an art.

Delegation is step four and can be a work of art for the effective leader. Every company has encountered the “do-it-all” leader. This leader feels, for whatever reason, that if the job is to get done and done right she will have to do it herself. This leader is spread out so thin that something will suffer, either at home or at work. The effective leader will delegate the responsibilities for various tasks and this includes the authority that goes with it. She realizes that this is not a shirking of responsibilities or laziness but rather becoming a more focused leader that can handle the bigger projects and decisions.

Step 5: Encouragement goes a long way.

The effective leader is a great source of encouragement to those around him. Having a leader who offers advice and guidance to the younger employees as they discover their career paths and encourages those employees to better themselves is a great asset to the company. This will also build loyalty to the company and make great leaders for the future. It means a great deal when the employees receive recognition of some kind for a job well done, even if it is just a pat on the back or a note from a superior. They want to not only know they make a difference but also appreciate it when you as a leader tell them so.

Step 6: Reliability is more valuable than gold.

The pinnacle of this trek to effective leadership is reliability. A leader that all the employees can count on is perhaps the most important of all. This leader will listen and not spread rumors at the water cooler. This leader realizes that his word is his bond and

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once that is destroyed he is no longer the effective leader that is needed in so many companies. All the employees and other supervisors know whom they can count on and whom they cannot. In light of the scandals of Enron, Aldephia and Martha Stewart companies need reliable leaders.

Six steps to being an effective l.e.a.d.e.r. will serve you well as you climb the ladder to success, for without these six steps success will never be had. Incorporating these six attributes will ensure that you are an effective leader worth following. The leader who has no one following him is just simply out for a walk.