

Leadership ideas that really work

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Introduction

As one looks in bewilderment at what works as contemporary fashion, in desperation at what does not work as successful investments, and in utter frustration at what sometimes works on the computer screen, one can, quite properly, develop the conviction that it is only the remarkably brave or inordinately stupid that claims certain knowledge of how anything works in contemporary society. I am not “remarkably brave”.

None-the-less, I dare to give this presentation because it limits its claims to those ideas on leadership which have worked for me. This is a story not a blueprint. It is the shared reflection of a fellow traveller rather than mandated direction of a leadership expert. It is testimony not theory.

Constraints of time limit this presentation to five ideas on leadership for the Head, and five ideas on leadership for the Board.

The five leadership ideas explored in this presentation for the Head are:

- Choose your leadership style
- Choose your expertise
- Choose your portfolio
- Choose your reputation
- Choose your team

The five leadership ideas explored in this presentation for the Board are:

- Develop the distinctiveness
- Develop the plan, promise and appraisal
- Develop the image
- Develop the budget
- Develop the Board

NOTE

This presentation describes itself as such and does not pretend to be a paper. The nature of the topic invites much recourse to case studies and real-world examples which may be appropriate to share in a verbal presentation with colleagues but are probably not appropriate to share in a written form with strangers where it may be interpreted in a less generous manner. Hence, this will not be a transcript of the presentation but rather an outline of it.

FOR THE HEAD

Choose your leadership style

- Avoid the trap of choosing the management mindset and not the leadership mindset.
- Season your democracy with a dash of dictatorship.
- Know how to “arrange the chairs”.
- Adopt a “futures oriented” style of leadership.

Choose your expertise

- “Put on the running shoes”.
- Develop an acknowledged area of demonstrable professional expertise.
- Know something that others do not.

Choose your portfolio

- Don't "sweat the small stuff".
- Be neither the prosecutor nor investigator. Be the judge.
- Take the "extras".
- Follow the 2 Timothy 2:2 model.
- Make up for minimum time with maximum exposure.

Choose your reputation

- Personality driven schools.
- The idiosyncrasies of lying, litter and loyalty.
- Dress, grooming and bow ties.
- Common room connections.
- Verbiage and "wordiage".

Choose your team

Internal teams

- Know how to empower and to depower.
- Meetings with Socrates and the devil.
- Democracy, but count the votes.
- Keeping count of the goals.
- Knife-free zones.
- Using tissues.

External teams

- Professional bodies alive and dead.
- Friendship groups.
- Peer grouping.

FOR THE BOARD

Note that some of this information might well be suitable for the Head as well as for the Board.

Develop the distinctiveness

There is not much difference between distinction and distinctive. For a school to be known as a place of distinction, it must be known as a place which is distinctive.

- Never build classrooms.
- The “Me too” syndrome.

Develop the plan, promise and appraisal

- The difference between a plan and a promise.
Beware of plans which should be promises and promises which should be plans.
- Public and private plans.
- Now and how.
- Five minute changeovers and using the plan.
- Appraisal and using the plan.

Develop the image

- Operation “initial impression”.
- Operation “lasting impression”.
- Corporate image.
- Phones, sites, signage and other disasters.

Develop the budget

- Zero based budgets.
- Trimming submissions
 - Prioritise submissions*
 - Separate capital from recurrent expenditure*
 - Centralise the storage of resources*
 - Interview*
 - Prioritise against yearly and five yearly goals*
 - Avoid the “squeaky wheel” syndrome*
 - Consider giving set amounts*
- Know when to “swap the curtains”.

Develop the board

- Who is needed on a board
- The assets on a board

- the generator of ideas
- the useful skills person
- the encourager
- the keeper of the “corporate memory”
- the connected
- the wise
- the skilled
- The liabilities on a board
 - the old guard
 - the resistor
 - the parent
 - the head
 - the constitutional necessity
 - the permission giver
- Induction of Council
- Operating guidelines

Conclusion

- Leadership ideas that work in one setting may not work in another setting.
- Leadership ideas that work at one time may not work at another time.

Each and every one of us could have given this presentation for we all have leadership ideas that have worked well. It is my hope that you will have the chance to tell your own story. Future generations of educational leaders need to inherit your experience and sift from it that which might be of use from that which must be discarded in the development of their own leadership story.

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 2004