

So now you are a leader – why should I follow you?

Why should I follow you?

Why should I follow you? This is a very confronting question for many managers and leaders. Your team may not ask you this question directly, but it is a question they will be asking themselves.

If you ask a group of managers and leaders this question, you may end up with a lot of blank faces, or an even scarier response would be "because I am the boss".

One key characteristic of a good leader is **Self-awareness**. To know who you are, what you are trying to achieve and how you are going to do it. To effectively lead others it is important to understand your own strengths, weaknesses, values, management style, communication style and vision. It is also important to understand how others see you. The way we see ourselves is often very different to the way others see us.

I have been fortunate enough to be part of several organisations that understand that leaders need to develop their own self-awareness, and through that process, understand others better. I have seen many people grow in confidence, and become much better managers, leaders and team players in the process.

Understanding yourself from all perspectives

The process of self-awareness can take many forms. Some may prefer hours of unguided self-reflection, though most people would benefit from some practical tools and exercises to start the process. Some of the tools you can use to understand your leadership style better include:

1. Research and understand the various types of influence you can use to lead, and your preference for each type. Authority, expertise, relationship, information, reward and punishment. Know which type of influence you have, when to use it, and which you may need to develop.
2. Find out what your preferred learning style is, and understand that others learn differently (you can find learning styles questionnaires on the internet). We all learn differently, and understanding the way you take in information can help others communicate with you better, while also gaining a greater understand how others take in information.
3. Feedback from your team. Getting honest feedback can be difficult, but asking for regular feedback on your communications, actions and management style can give you valuable information on how to improve.
4. Learn about various delegation and management styles including: Autocratic, empathetic, democratic, laissez-faire, transactional. Understand your preferred style and the benefits of each style.
5. Psychometric assessments. There are a lot of psychometric assessments available, including Myers Briggs (MBTI). These assessments can give you excellent insight in to your personality and preferences, giving you a deeper understanding of your thought processes.
6. Understand your own values. Take the time to list the attitudes and values you believe in. Let your team know your values, and clearly communicate your expectations. Demonstrate your values in all of your dealings.

Conclusions

The journey of self-awareness as a leader is not only learning about yourself, your preferences and your style. It is about understanding the preferences and styles of others. A broader understanding of our differences, and a better understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses, will help you get the best out of you and your team.

Once you understand your strengths, your vision, values and management style, perhaps then you will be able to answer the question - Why should I follow you?

This article was written by Adrian Low, Managing Partner at HRINC.

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