

Tips for Becoming a More Effective Leader

As we know, leadership is a key ingredient in moving an organization from good to great, regardless of size. Leadership can be volunteers or hired staff.

Here are some strategies and tips that can help leaders with their skills.

1. **Know your material.** Many people who are good at selling can "bluff" their way into closing the deal, but they don't necessarily end up delivering the goods. It's important to learn all you can about your issues. You must know the benefits as well as the challenges that you may find. It's imperative that you have a clear understanding and you can quickly and clearly articulate your cause.
2. **You must have absolute integrity.** Without trust and confidence in your staff, fellow volunteers, and key stakeholders you are going **nowhere**. This is a bottom line issue and an absolute standard of excellence. Stand up for your values and beliefs because once you compromise them, you compromise not only your soul, but the soul of the organization you are leading.
3. **Demonstrate commitment.** As a leader, people are looking to you to set the standard and become the role model of the organization. Leadership starts with you -- so raise the bar and keep it high and direct staff and/or volunteers to match your drive, passion and commitment.
4. **Always be positive** even to the point that it hurts. The leader must have a clear sense of what is possible. S/he must present a "can do" and optimistic attitude that helps get every one else through the hard times.
5. **Say, "I don't know."** If you don't know an answer, don't be afraid to say so. Don't fake a response! Instead, tell them you will get back to them with the answer or ask them to help you find the answer.
6. **Support and nurture staff and volunteers.** The most precious asset and your biggest strength are the great people you surround yourself with who are strong where you are weak. For example, if you're no good with numbers, make sure you have an accountant you can count on. Take care and support these people because they will make you "look good" every time.
7. **Don't be afraid to lead from the rear *and* from the front.** When the situation calls for you to be in front of the audience and present or defend your position, do so. When it is important to become the "servant leader" and push from behind to develop other leadership, do so. One of your jobs as a leader is to mentor and groom future leaders.
8. **Decisions are not about consensus.** It's difficult for some leaders to recognize that there simply cannot be total agreement on all decisions. Don't be afraid to stick your neck out and make that decision! That's why **you** were elected to be the leader.