

Leadership

“Paradoxes of Leadership”



Tony Swainston Ltd

Paradoxes of leadership 1

A belief in oneself

The only thing that gives an individual the self-confidence to step into the unknown and to persuade others to go where no one has gone before

A decent doubt

The humility to accept that one can be wrong on occasion, that others have ideas, that listening is as important as talking

Paradoxes of leadership 2

A passion for the job

This provides the energy and focus that drive the organisation and that act as an example to others

An awareness of other worlds

Focus can turn to a blinkered view of the world therefore it is important to think beyond the box. Great leaders find time to read, to meet people beyond their own circle, to go to the theatre or see films, to walk in other worlds.

Paradoxes of leadership 3

A love of people

Those who find individuals a pain may be respected or feared, but they will not be willingly followed nor develop as effective leaders.

A capacity for aloneness

Leaders have to be out front. Few will thank the leader when things go right, but many will blame the leader if things go wrong. Great leaders have to walk alone from time to time. They also have to live vicariously, deriving their satisfaction from the successes of others and giving to others the recognition that they themselves are often denied.

Your personal paradox levels

- Look at the 3 pairs of “paradox statements” about leadership
- Try to grade yourself realistically on a scale of 1 to 10 for each of these
- Can you have say 8 on one statement and 8 on its complementary (or paradox-pair) statement?

Further paradoxes of leadership

- it is an art and a science,
- it involves change and stability,
- it draws on personal attributes and requires interpersonal relationships, it sets visions and results in action,
- it honours the past and exists for the future,
- it manages things and leads people,
- it is transformational and transactional,
- it serves employees and customers,
- it requires learning and unlearning,
- it centres on values and it is seen in behaviours.

Ulrich says:

“leadership, like the inner workings of a computer, is a complex set of relationships, systems, and processes that few fully master”.

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