



Three Lessons To Success

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I offer three simple lessons for leaders wishing to have a great company. It only took me 30 years, hundreds of books, thousands of hours in the company trenches, millions of dollars and zillions of air miles to figure it out. You can be a lot smarter.

Here they are:

1. Listen
2. Learn to defuse emotions
3. Gain from the power of the group

Sounds pretty easy, doesn't it? Just as easy as saying you can lose weight by eating less and exercising more. But why can't you readily lose those pounds? So, let's admit it, we probably need to add a few words about what seems so easy.

1. Listening

How often have you seen formerly successful business people tumble down? A single leading cause for failure is an inability to adapt to change. But, adapt to what change? Only by listening can we learn what is going on out there. The twin demons of arrogance and complacency, (especially of successful people who 'know it all' by now), often shut off the listening channels. It is only by feedback that we learn how to adapt. As you drive your car, your eyes tell you there are turns in the road and so you adapt and gently take the turn. Try driving with your eyes closed if you think feedback is not important. And to whom should you listen? To the dozen or hundreds of staff member at the base of your empire who are in constant contact with the real world that is changing every day if not every hour. Set up a company-wide, blame-free, listening network now, starting with yourself.

2. Defusing Emotions

You have a simple choice when confronted with an insult. You can strike back and escalate the encounter or you can defuse the emotion by recognizing the other person has a problem – and not make it your problem too. So let the personal insult pass, get back to the prime issue. It takes a much stronger person to turn the other cheek

for the sake of the real issue. The hockey player who is taunted to fight and causes a penalty, which creates a winning opposing goal, has let his emotions take precedence over the team's purpose. We can say that after solving over 600 corporate issues, they are resolved 100% of the time if we let emotions stay outside of the process and rarely solved if we permit emotions because they have nothing to do with the prime issue we set out to address.

3. Gain from the Group

You or any other person might come to a meeting with some ideas; the combination of 8 people, say, with 5 ideas each might suggest $8 \times 5 = 40$ specific thoughts. Wrong! The assembly will produce twice as many ideas at least. There is some sort of idea multiplier when the synergy of a group is put into play. Try it and see – on anything. Therefore to run your company successfully get as many people involved as possible at every step of the way (in a controlled-sized manner). Form as large a group as you can at weekly meetings, while solving problems, during annual planning or in developing a corporate mission statement. Not only do you get a more rounded result, you get a sense of ownership within and buy-in from the staff. Those who restrict attendance to the elite get a biased, less comprehensive outcome.

4. Conclusion

"There it is", said the emperor to Mozart, "just the right number of notes". And there it is for you too. All you need to do is (a) set up a system that puts these principles to work in your office, (b) practice, practice, practice and (c) do it with humility.

Good luck!
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