

Don't buy into the position myth

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One of the biggest misconceptions about leadership is the belief that leadership comes simply from having a position or title. It doesn't. You don't need to possess a position at the top of your group, department, division, or organization in order to lead. If you think you do, then you have bought into the position myth.

A place at the top will not automatically make anyone a leader. The Law of Influence in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* by John Maxwell states clearly: "The true measure of leadership is influence--nothing more, nothing less." If you influence someone to think or act, you're a leader (hopefully it's a positive influence rather than a negative one).

Leadership is dynamic and the right to lead must be earned individually with each person you meet. How you impact that person depends a lot on your history with that person. In most instances, your ability to lead often begins with you having a position or some degree of authority over them, but in time, ends up being based on your ability to develop and guide them. Here's how successful

leaders typically transition through an effective leadership journey:

First, you're given a position or title that gives you authority over people. People initially follow you because they have to. They will follow only within the boundaries of your job description. In time, though, you can increase your influence beyond your position and title.

Leaders who establish some kind of relationship or bond with people can lead beyond the position. If you treat people with dignity and respect, value them as human beings, and care for them, they will begin to trust you. As a result, they will give you permission to lead them. They will follow you because they want to rather than because they have to.

After you form relationships with people, it can allow work environments to be fun and engaging. This is all great but after a while, if you don't guide people to real production, the highly motivated ones may become restless. Therefore, it is essential that you keep your people productive--that they consistently and successfully achieve work objectives/organizational goals. This is when people follow you because of what you do for the organization.

Once production is solid, you can

begin finding ways to develop your people for growth and professional advancement. In essence, we're talking about you developing leaders. This involves a lot of mentoring. People follow leaders who value them, add value to them, and make them more valuable. This is the point when people follow you because of what you have done for them.

Lastly, people are more likely to willingly follow someone because of who that person is and what they represent (if it involves a high degree of respect or admiration). This level of leadership is usually reserved for those who have spent years growing people and organizations. This is when a leader is viewed as bigger than life (like a sage or national leader or maybe even a great enterprise leader).

Leadership is complicated. It is more than a position or title. Every level of an organization depends on leadership from someone. The bottom line is this: Leadership is a choice you make, not a place you sit. So don't buy into the position myth. You can choose to become a leader from wherever you are in the organization or group.

~ The End ~