advice chief

Model the behavior you desire

By Jeff "Chief" Urbaniak
COLUMNIST (www.AdviceChief.com)

Just as consistency is effective in your personal life, it can also be effective in your leadership. Leaders set the tone and the pace for the people working for them. Therefore, they need to be what they want to see in others.

I once worked for someone whose expectations from others was not in sync with his attitude and behavior. He reminded everyone what he "would not tolerate" yet he violated almost every one of those things. He once told me, "We will not lie, cheat, or steal anything." Yet he consistently misled his boss on his whereabouts, padded statistics with questionable or inaccurate information, and had no problem siphoning office supplies from another department that strictly budgeted for them. Eventually, though, he caused his own demise when he was caught lying to a top-level leader who instilled a different kind of culture in the organization.

If you desire to instill a particular value into your organization's culture, then you need to ask yourself whether it will consist of an identifiable behavior among the people in the organization. If it does, then you must start with yourself. You cannot expect an organization of people to exhibit behavior that you don't model. You must "be what you expect."

Roy Disney, brother and partner of Walt Disney, said, "It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are." Not only is that true, but it's easier to stick with decisions when they are based on values. Decisions not consistent with values are almost always short-lived.

Whatever you embrace will come out in the decisions of your people. If you value shortcuts, then your employees will make decisions that value speed over quality. If you are insensitive to others' feelings, then your staff will make decisions that don't take people's feelings into account. If you exhibit even the slightest tolerance for dishonesty, then you can bet that someone on the team will think it's okay to make decisions that violate the standards of integrity.

Your character as a person and leader will determine the level of trust people have in you. Are the people who work for you quick to believe that you have their best interests at heart? Or do they question your intentions and weigh your motives when you introduce them to a new idea? The answers to those questions can be traced back to your character.

Trust is not given nor can it be assumed simply because you have a leadership position with others. Trust has to be earned, and it usually comes when you are tested. Whether you pass or fail the test is always determined by your character. Maybe a passing grade in school is 70 percent, but when it comes to trust, the only passing grade is 100 percent. And in a sense, if people can't trust you all the time, then they will consider you untrustworthy.

When it comes to work, your work ethic will determine their productivity. There's a story of a crusty old Scotsman who worked hard and expected the people he led to do the same. His workers would tease, "Hey Scotty, don't you know that Rome wasn't built in a day?"

"Aye, I know that," he would answer. "But I wasn't the foreman on that job."

Leaders truly do set the tone on the job when it comes to productivity. Most people soon feel uncomfortable if they are lax in their work ethic but they can see their boss working diligently. Employees who possess strong character quickly feel prompted to pick up the pace.

Thomas Jefferson said, "It's wonderful how much can be done if we are always working." If you want your people to always be working, you had better be too.

Followers become like their leaders. They are influenced by their leaders' values. They also adopt their leaders' working methods, and many even emulate their quirks and habits. That's why you must always be aware of your own conduct before criticizing the people who work for you. If you don't like what your people are doing or not doing, first look at yourself. Model the behavior you desire.

~ The End ~