



June 2007

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Focus

A Newsletter published for clients and friends of Wagner Consulting Group

Why Leaders are Needed

Leadership is about influence, and influence works best to maximize human potential and reduce employee turnover. While managers are concerned about doing things right (and that's a good thing), leaders are concerned with doing the right things. Put another way, managers work with processes while leaders work with people. Leaders WOO – win others over. The value of good leadership is can be measured in profit, and is especially compelling for companies competing in the built environment.

Near the end of his book *The 360° Leader*, leadership expert John C. Maxwell identifies seven reasons why leaders are needed. Leaders make an important difference in the following seven areas.

- **Common vision.** There can be only one *Keeper of the Vision*, but the leader must constantly communicate to sell the vision and reinforce desired attitudes and behaviors. Keeping people's efforts aligned with the overarching goal is an indispensable leadership role.
- **Prompt decisions.** Important decisions are made promptly when the leader insists on dealing with reality and holds people accountable for results. Alternately, decisions are delayed, often until the delay *becomes* a decision, in a leadership vacuum or when the person at the top engages in part-time leadership.
- **Shared goals.** A leader confronts and corrects personal agendas that are incompatible with teamwork and goal achievement. This minimizes office politics. Without a strong leader, people follow their own agendas and do their own thing, resulting in waste at least, or - at worst - a poor working environment that runs off good employees.
- **Conflict resolution.** Conflicts inevitably arise when people work together, and may involve issues of policy, strategy, resource allocation, or other business issues, not to mention personal issues. Without a leader to arbitrate and make decisions when necessary, conflicts can become a

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toxic threat to the organization as they grow and spread to include more people.

- **High morale.** Effective leaders lift spirits, individually and for groups of people. When a leader shows confidence in a follower, that belief can be a powerful and persistent motivator – even a life-changing event. Leaders inspire, and give life.
- **Increased production.** A good leader is almost always an effective manager, and this combination of the ability to analyze, control, and motivate boosts output while simultaneously minimizing wasted time and money.
- **Sustainable growth.** Finally, leaders create sustainable success by building a culture that continuously develops people and incubates the next generation of leaders. They know they must have both great people and robust internal procedures (achieving the correct balance between Stars and Systems) to maintain a healthy organization. A great leader builds a company that will not just survive, but thrive when he or she is gone.

It's fashionable nowadays to preach the importance of training employees, and many companies are placing more emphasis on skill and safety training. That's good. But the leaders of people-centered organizations do more than equip people to do a job; they develop the capacity of their people and improve them as individuals.

Management guru Tom Peters said, "People stuff is the only stuff" 25 years ago, and that observation is even more important today. In today's constantly changing, increasingly competitive, labor-short business environment, the soft stuff is the hard stuff. A people-centered business is more creative, flexible, has lower employee turnover, and is a talent magnet that attracts desirable workers.

Tom Wagner

We help our clients accelerate profitable growth

Call us at 800 422-1374 to learn more

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