

Business

Why employers need to lead RIGHT

By Rosalind Jackson

As we continue to go through the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, month after month after long month, it has in many ways changed how our organisations work and how we work with our people.

Many had to, and some are still working from home. Some people got laid off. Some had to work harder to pick up the slack from the reduction in the number of team members. These folks may even have suffered a salary cut which may or may not have been restored.

Families have had to cope with their own hardships; be it reduced household revenue, children trying to handle remote schooling. This requires our children to work with whatever device they can get and parents to juggle their own demanding job while assisting their children as necessary assuming that the parent is truly working from home.

Meeting and/or learning remotely both require an increase in our attention span. Without any professional help we just try to do what we have to do. Oftentimes we just get frustrated and maybe turn off our cameras to mentally cut out.

So, what do we leaders need to do to truly lead through and out of this pandemic? We need solid and cohesive teams that focus on doing their best work whether they are at their desk in the traditional workplace or their desk at home.

Such teams can only evolve if they have genuine, progressive leadership which is definitely more about the intangibles of character than it is about the tangibles of business/industry knowledge and skills which should be givens for managers far less leaders.

All leaders need to be honing the fundamentals of effective leadership. These I have captured in the acronym leading R-I-G-H-T which, if lacking, would have become quite glaring as we all had to be agile and adjust to the realities of a global pandemic in a small open service economy.

Respect

Respect is an overarching consideration for any genuine leader of people. It is about recognising each human being's intrinsic value and being willing to really connect with everyone in your organisation regardless of their role/position. If a gardener or a delivery worker has been with your organisation for at least two months and you do not know his/her



name or anything about that human as an individual, do you think that you are working to treat him/her with mutual respect? When and how do you really connect with below supervisory level? Do you pass staff in the corridor or in the yard without greeting them? If so, you are truly disrespectful. Would you want them to treat clients like that?

It is very hard (rather impossible) to motivate people to whom you do not show respect. Mutual respect does not care where in the organisational chart you are. It is simply one human being with feelings being respectful to another human being with feelings.

Integrity

Integrity in plain English, is being as good as your word and doing what you are supposed to be doing, whether or not someone is looking.

As a leader that is what you want from each member of your team so that a foundation of trust is created. Are you prepared to be open and honest with each of your team members which can sometimes make you vulnerable and show your own "humanness"? A leader's real job is to lead by example in the important value-based characteristics being discussed in leading R-I-G-H-T.

Growth mindset

A growth mindset is the ability to open your mind to new ideas, new ways of doing things and a willingness to be flexible as you consider various perspectives for the way forward. It is about having a vision of how things can be different and throwing away the old "blinkers".

If the COVID-19 pandemic has not forced leaders and/or their team members to try different things and search for ways to do things better, then your team is probably in peril.

Humility

We cannot go into the future with a "manage change" mindset. We need to understand the necessity to become "change agile" – this being a very valuable corporate attribute as we lead into the future, full of uncertainties.



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To me this means having an uninflated view of self and being meek enough to accept others and their contributions no matter where in the organisational chart they sit. Their perspective might be exactly what leaders need to understand. The power of a humble leader who really listens for understanding and does not make knee jerk reaction decisions is important but rare. We traditionally believe that leaders need to be loudmouth extroverts. They sometimes can be bullies.

Tenacity

You cannot truly lead, especially in our uncertain times, without tenacity. This ability to be determined and not cave in at obstacles is a must have for effective leadership and the longevity of the organisation.

As you lead R-I-G-H-T into 2022, we urge you to really listen to your people to find out how they are truly thinking and feeling. Look out for Barbados' Best Employers 2022 as an objective way to garner your people's thoughts, feelings and advice.

Rosalind Jackson is managing director of Caribbean Catalyst Inc., the founders and organisers of the biennial Barbados' Best Employers programme, which will be held in 2022.