

Great Leaders Inspire Great Followership

5 methods for a strong followership

 By Jose Cruz

“If no one is following you, you’re just taking a walk”

Mediocre leaders complain of a lack of good followership. They cite poor hiring decisions, a lack of good policy and process, poor education, and the inability to offer competitive salaries for the “really good people out there”. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Policy, practice, and the competitive nature of industry may all play some very minor role in the quality of a team, but the real reason for a failure to follow is far closer than the policy manual on the shelf or the HR office down the hall.

The chief responsibility of strong followership, and the fault behind a failure in strong followership, rests primarily with - you guessed it - the one doing the walking.

WHAT GREAT LEADERS DO

Great leaders know how to produce and sustain good followership. They are watchful, responsive, and proactively engaged in maintaining good followership. They are constantly engaging their team, and yet, remarkably so, there is never once a complaint about micromanaging or “hovering”. Good leaders know how to lead well, and they know how to produce the results necessary for good teams to function well. They have great followers, because they set it in their minds and daily practice to produce good followers. They don’t wait for good followers to show up, they produce them with the team they are given.

You can achieve the same results by following the example great leaders set for producing great teams.

Sound ambitious? Absolutely. Difficult? Not at all.

The following five methods for producing good followership, if implemented well enough and consistently enough, can generate similarly great followership results for you as a leader. These are not one-time shots, nor will they survive any kind of “lip service”, but they are neither complex nor difficult to put into practice.

A consistent effort on all five fronts will get you well on your way toward having the kind of team you can be proud to have following you.

Here they are:

1. Talk About Good Followership. Put the subject on the table, discuss it around the water cooler, and chat about it during your mid-morning walk. Seek to understand firstly how your teammates define good followership, and share your own insights and hopes on the subject. Discuss it formally and informally, singularly and in a group setting, but integrate the topic into discussions with your team on a regular basis. Seek to understand, and learn their opinions and insights on the matter. Listening is imperative, so ask solidly curious and sincere questions and wait for the insights to emerge.

2. Agree On Good Followership. Themes will rise from the discussions you have with your team. Materials you all agree to read together will provide some ground to work from. Agreements on particular practice will naturally form. Write them down,

share them, post them on the conference room wall, append them to the bottom of every agenda, and make them part of the culture of your team. Ask your team members to hold one another - and you - accountable to practicing good followership.

3. Practice Good Followership. Set the example. When they see or hear you interact with or speak about your peers and superiors, let them see and hear the kind of followership you wish to see in them. Practice the kind of followership you as a team have agreed to practice. Be consistent, sincere, and visibly 100% committed to practicing good followership with your boss.

4. Train for Good Followership. If your discussions raise issues of team-experienced failures in followership, concerns, or desires for strengthening particular attributes of good followership, provide the training ASAP. Show your commitment to helping the team practice good followership by supplying the training necessary to make it happen. If listening is a problem identified by the team, provide books, materials, speakers, and agenda topics on “active listening”. Train and practice until the topic is mastered and the team feels they’ve accomplished something together related to good followership.

5. Reward Good Followership. When you see it, reward it. Praise it. Acknowledge it. Ask for more of it. Always be on the lookout for good followership and give it the attention and appreciation it deserves. Praise creates a desire for more praise. Attention draws greater intention. Don’t identify failures in good followership and critique it; look for successes and hail it as a victory for the entire team.

Practice what the great leaders practice to produce the teams they need to succeed, and you’ll soon have one of the best teams you have ever had the honor to lead. **LE**



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