

Seven essential behaviours for leaders

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From disaster earlier this year which saw a 33% fall in sales, Toyota has bounced back with president, Akio Toyoda, announcing recently that production lines will be at full capacity again by November.

This confidence and amazing ability to overcome challenges, has been the defining strength of the company in its 74 year history, and this strength stems from their well-known philosophy: The Toyota Way.

Hylton Bannon, Managing Director, Toyota Kenya Limited, who ran his course on Lean Leadership at the UCT Graduate School of Business in September, said in the media recently that this approach relies on the continuous improvement of processes, paired with respect for people, no matter what their position within the organisation.

"This leads to a non-hierarchical decision-making landscape, where employees are empowered to solve problems quickly," says Bannon adding that Toyota is famous for the scenario where the guy on the shop floor is empowered to make the decision to stop the production line if he thinks there is a problem.

Bannon mentions several behaviours leaders should adopt to make this "lean" approach a success in their organisations.

Know your people and business

"Know your business and keep on knowing your business," said Frank Bettger, author of the best-selling, *How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success in Selling*.

And second to knowing your business, is to know your people. Through observation or conversation it greatly empowers a leader's ability to assign tasks, to motivate people, harness their talents, team them up, trust them, and offer them added responsibility if he/she knows what drives them, keeps them happy, where their talents and strengths lay, what their attitudes towards work and life are, their values.

Insist on honesty

American businesswoman and founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics, Inc, Mary Kay Ash said about honesty: "Honesty is the cornerstone of all success, without which confidence and ability to perform shall cease to exist." It is important that a leader instil this notion throughout the organisation, to build an unshakeable trust between all who work in it, imbedding a shared responsibility throughout.

Set clearly defined goals and priorities

Ancient Greek philosopher, scientist and physician, Aristotle, said about goal setting and priorities: "First, have a definite, clear practical ideal; a goal, an objective. Second, have the necessary means to achieve your ends; wisdom, money, materials, and methods. Third, adjust all your means to that end."

Always follow through (Plan Do Check Action)

"It was character that got us out of bed, commitment that moved us into action and discipline that enabled us to follow through," said American motivational speaker and author, Zig Ziglar.

Often quoted by motivational speakers, FW Nichol said: "When you get right down to the root of the word, *succeed*, you

find that it simply means to *follow through*."

Reward the doers

In *Execution - the Discipline of Getting Things Done* written by Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan, rewarding the doers is highlighted as the most important tool for keeping teams in the organisation motivated to deliver. A leader is execution centric and should acknowledge those who help him/her 'get things done'.

Expand people's capabilities

Peter Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline - the Art and Practice of a Learning Organisation*, one of the most influential management books of the last century, argued that in a rapidly changing environment only those that are flexible, adaptive and productive will succeed. It is important to tap into employees' human urge to learn and not just to survive but to increase the organisations capacity for creativity.

Know yourself

Bossidy and Charan, in *Execution - the Discipline of Getting Things Done* write: "Good leaders learn their specific personal strengths and weaknesses, especially in dealing with other people, then build on the strengths and correct the weaknesses."

Lean leadership is a philosophy. It is a consistent way of thinking and being in your role as a leader. It is not a tangible recipe for success, neither is it a management project and it certainly is not a once off event. It is a continuous way of being for all people in an organisation, department or team - a never-ending search for a better way. In other words it is an environment of teamwork and improvement versus being a set of tools to be implemented. For lean leadership to be sustainable it needs to become a culture.

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