

# Are You an Exemplary Leader?

Unless you are making a conscious effort to learn to lead, probably not!

When I tell people I am a leadership consultant, most get a puzzled look on their face and say, “Oh, what does a leadership consultant do?” Maybe that shouldn’t bother me, but it does. Few people are familiar with what a leadership consultant does because our society fails miserably at conveying what admirable leadership really entails and how important it is.

During seminars when I ask people to define the word leader, they say all the right things like...A leader is someone who inspires others to work with confidence...A leader is a good listener and communicator...A leader has strong values. And these are all excellent ways to describe a leader but the word “leader” has become so overused, and misused, that somewhere along the way, the real meaning has gotten lost.

Today, the word leader is synonymous with position, title, authority, intelligence, experience and financial means. But one thing is for sure, the people who equate their leadership ability with these things, are only leaders by today’s lousy standards. Consequently, all it takes to be granted the privilege to lead people is some arbitrarily prescribed level of intelligence, political correctness, longevity and the willingness to work long hours. That’s it! Subordinates, the people you are supposed to be leading, don’t even have to respect you, much less like you.

In business there is a lot of confusion about leadership in part because executives and business owners look around and see all of these people *following* them and so they think they *must* be leaders. But if people are only following because they *have* to, you are not a leader. An exemplary leader is someone we *gladly* and *willingly* follow. After all, most people will follow and cooperate when their livelihoods are at stake. But when people follow only because of the significant amount of leverage you have over them, you are not a leader—a more appropriate term would be dictator.

Let me put it another way, if people see the picture above and think of you, YOU ARE NOT A LEADER!! Sadly though, most of the people who are thought of in this unfortunate way don’t even know it because their giant egos won’t permit it. I had the displeasure of working with a guy whose ego was so big it is a wonder he just didn’t topple over when he stood up. And if you



ever disagreed with this man, he got so visibly angry—clenched fists, red face, raised voice—and yet, he was convinced he was a tremendous leader. It would have been comical if it weren’t so sad.

Listen: If people sit in meetings and nod their head and go, “Uh, huh, great idea, I’ll get right on that” and then walk out saying “What an idiot!”, you’re not a leader. If people are holding back and can’t say to you what they are really feeling, congratulations, you’ve created a political environment. A typical response to this is “Oh no, we don’t have politics here”. But when people choose their words and actions based on how they want others to react instead of how they really feel for fear of ruffling feathers and the negative impact it will surely have on their career, that’s a political environment.

HINT: To find out if you are an exemplary leader, institutionalize anonymous 360-degree feedback ([lookout for the PMETH Leadership Challenge coming soon](#)). Speaking of 360-degree feedback, I was talking about the review process to the operations manager at a firm where

I worked at the time—coincidentally owned by the aforementioned egomaniac—and she said, “Yeah, we used to do 360-degree feedback, but that turned out to be a nightmare”. What she meant was that the feedback was so negative they just quit doing it. That’s a great message to send—“We don’t care what you think!” Every person should want to know how he or she is performing in the eyes of their colleagues and direct reports (they *are* the ones receiving the service after all). If you don’t want to know, you have serious leadership issues that need to be addressed—immediately—for your sake but more importantly for the people you are *supposed* to be leading! After all, it’s not about you! We are all working for the greater good; something much larger than ourselves! We are here to make our companies and the people around us better.

The fallen business executives of the world have proven time and time again that it takes more than intelligence and a fancy title to be a leader!! So remember, education and professional experience are only half of what you need to be truly successful and leadership ability makes up the other half. Learn to lead—for everyone’s sake!!

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**PMETH Quotes To Live By...***Being a leader is like being a lady...If you have to tell people you are, you aren't.* **Unknown**

