

The Leadership Toolbox

Welcome to the Leadership Toolbox – tips and techniques focused on enhancing success. This will be an on-going bulletin designed to provide you with practical and helpful tools, techniques and tips that you can immediately implement to increase your effectiveness.

Anyone can be a leader within an organization and all leaders influence others. Many believe that having an effective leader is the most important aspect for employee engagement, satisfaction and productivity. Just having a familiarity of or knowing about key leadership competencies isn't enough, Demonstrating key competencies effectively is the key. Many times, those not in official leadership positions demonstrate the most effective leadership skills. So the tips and techniques we will include in this Toolbox Bulletin will be designed with a healthy balance of information and implementation tips.

Competency: Authenticity

Definition: Undisputed credibility; being genuine and honest with oneself as well as others; the quality or condition of being real, trustworthy, or genuine; refers to the truthfulness of origins, attributions, commitments, sincerity, devotion, and intentions.

Background: The first and perhaps the most important skill for any leader to be successful is to demonstrate authentic leadership. Authenticity means being straightforward and genuine in one's words and actions, especially when the message or initiative may not be pleasant or preferred. It means telling folks what you know as well as what you don't know. It means taking responsibility for both individual success as well as individual setbacks and mistakes. Authentic leadership means being true to yourself and to others.

Implementation & Demonstration: Remember, just to know about a competency is not enough. The trick is to balance understanding with effective demonstration. So let's look at some methods to effectively demonstrate this skill.

Tip: Employees are people, not numbers or projects. Take time to get to know those you work with, their interests, needs and expectations for the work environment. Let them get to know you. Treat employees like people you care about. Be someone they want to work for. Talk with them. Listen to them. Laugh with them. Be direct with them. Show respect with them. Make them feel valued – not just as an employee but as a human being.

Tip: Take five minutes a day to connect with one employee. If you can't find five minutes a day, start with five minutes a week. Check in with the employee just to say hello and to see how they are doing – and not just on a project you are waiting for... Make it safe for them to be honest and authentic with you. And don't stop there – try doing this with peers and others. If you are sincere in your efforts, it often yields successful results.

Tip: Very simply, consistently walk your talk. Follow through on what you say you will do. Don't promise what you can't deliver on. Intentions are not outcomes which is what most of us are judged on. Integrity is not a hat you can put on and take off when it's convenient. Once you lose this, it's very, very difficult to recover. Doing what you say, being congruent, is something you should be doing all the time, each and every day.

Tip: Listen to understand. Sincerely ask questions of people and then, take the time to really listen to the responses. Listen to understand before sharing your perspective. Whether related to personal or professional scenarios, this action demonstrates to others that you care about them, as employees, as people.

Tip: Do a quick self-assessment to see when you are not being authentic. Identify behaviors that oppose your authentic self. Take a few moments to ponder why you do these things. When you obscure who you are as a human being, you dampen your spirit, motivation and engagement with the work you do as well as with those you work with and for. Also, people who hide their authentic self tend to be perceived as angry and frustrated by others. And this lack of energy transmits to those you work with which diminishes their motivation and productivity. Find ways to be who you are in a safe and respectful manner. I want to add that there are some behaviors that may be a part of our authentic self that might not fit the professional culture of our work environment. It is important not to push these behaviors in an environment that would not find them respectful or appropriate but rather, to strike a balance between professionalism and our authentic selves.

Tip: A final tip for being authentic, share your feelings. Too often as leaders we just tell people to do things, without sharing the important “why” behind the task. By letting others know how you feel about an issue you are disclosing more of yourself, being vulnerable and letting others get to know you better. What could be more authentic than that?

Benefits of Demonstrating this Competency Effectively:

1. You earn the reputation as an honest individual. If you are a leader, your employees will likely work harder for you and be more honest and straightforward with you.
2. Because you act with authenticity, you don't have to remember what you said to whom. You won't accidentally contradict yourself. People will perceive your actions and words as genuine.
3. People will respect being led by you. You will be able to get more done in less time and with less effort. People will follow your lead without the need for extra motivation or persuasion.
4. You will feel good about going to and being at work. People will like working with you, and you them.
5. Your stress levels will lessen. You will be healthier, sleep better and be more effective and productive at home and at work.
6. You will be more persuasive and influential. Employees appreciate honesty and information. If they believe you are telling them the truth, it will go along way. You will feel more supported by your employees.
7. You will be perceived as trustworthy. People who are not seen as “real” are not trusted.

Consequences of Not Demonstrating This Competency Effectively:

If an employee doesn't trust his/her supervisor, there is no potential for influence or leadership to occur. Symptoms of this include:

- Higher absence and turnover
- Lower staff productivity/higher incidence of errors/late projects
- Decreased effectiveness
- Less engagement with responsibilities
- Increased number of sick calls
- Ineffective leadership image / ability to influence

Quotes on Authenticity:

The most important persuasion tool you have in your entire arsenal is integrity. *Zig Ziglar*

Actions lie louder than words. *Carolyn Wells*

Truth is what stands the test of experience. *Albert Einstein*

Thank You.

We hope the information presented in this bulletin has been practical and helpful.

Please let us know what you think and how it could be improved.

Make it a great day!

The Lynn & Associates Team