

[WHAT IT TAKES TO LEAD]

MONDAY JULY 25, 2005

They say great leaders are born, not made... but we try to look at what goes into the making of a good leader

WORK WISE - A fortnightly column by Rahul Kapoor

Great leaders get great performances out of ordinary people. Only those leaders who think and believe in progress and can push for progress. Leaders in any field education, politics, sports etc. know that achieving high level of success requires the support and cooperation of others. And gaining support requires special leadership skills. Leading others can simply mean getting people to do things, which they would not do if they were not led.

Leaders stand for progress

India had spent years with slow or no progress. One can blame it to issues of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, corruption and poor economic policies or simply to ineffective leadership.

But on the other hand, we have seen unbelievable growth in our country over the last few years. We can see India becoming a powerful nation with plenty of job opportunities made available, attempts are being made to control corruption, infrastructure is being ramped up every where and one can see India progressing in almost all fields.

The question is - What has really made the difference? The answer is the quality of our leaders. We can look at leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Man Mohan Singh and aptly say these leaders stand for progress, they are the men who know their job. Very often when companies are going through a downward trend, a simple change at the top level can see things turn around. The same principle holds good for a country as well. It is this handful of leaders whose progressive thinking, positive high standards, true commitment can push the country towards progress and we should be fortunate to have had two of the best in business to rule our country.

Leaders instill pride and sense of respect

Let me share with you a live example of my nephew's class teacher. This kid, who is in his 5th standard, like any other boy is playful, can get very distracted and does not keep his notes updated.

But this year, I observed that he is doing surprisingly well in three subjects. His notes are complete, handwriting is getting better, and his interest levels in these three subjects have shot up dramatically. When I visited his school during the open-day I realized that all these subjects are handled by one person that is his class teacher.

During a brief conversation with her I got to understand that she likes children and wants every one to do well. She considers each one of them as individuals. She appeals

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to their pride and sense of respect by setting simple goals for them like completing notes, getting the home work in on time, concentrating in the class and ensures that they achieve them. She seemed much disciplined and thus could obtain the same out of all students. This class teacher believes in progress and thus she is able to push her students for progress. In this case the teacher is a leader and may we hope there is many more of her breed in our society

Leaders are creative and bring about change

After a golden period of 1983 World Cup victory the Indian cricket team has never found the golden touch again. Even if they did taste success, they found it hard to sustain it for long. This is in spite of having some of the best players in the world playing in our team.

This could be attributed to lack of creative ideas to improve performance, also could be because the team and the selectors never wanted to experiment with new players and technology. This perhaps led to a kind of stagnation and even stars performed below standards. It took away that killer instinct from the team. The result is; more hard work but less success.

But during the last 5 years, Indian cricket has shown the desire to imbibe innovative ideas to improve their on-field performance. Former coach John Right initiated novel methods like yoga in training schedules, using motivational videos on Lance Armstrong's inspirational recovery from cancer and becoming world's number one cyclist, organizing workshops on goal setting before the world cup in South Africa and now with a sharp thinker of the game like Greg Chappell at helm our team has already undergone a workshop on Lateral Thinking invented by Dr. Edward De Bono. It's anybody's guess that the Indian cricket team is ready to write a new chapter of success.

Great leaders are never satisfied with what exists; they want continuous improvement in everything they do. They bring in new ideas to do a task quicker, with more accuracy and better quality. They believe in change and motivate others to accept it willfully.

Finally remember, when you take over the leadership of a group, the persons in that group immediately adjust themselves to the standards you set. They watch every move you make and act accordingly. So the onus of success depends only on the way you think, act and live. Over a period of time your team will only copy your efforts. Thus it becomes important that the master copy, which is you, is worth duplicating.