Nurturing Potential Leaders

Many organizations today fail to tap into their potential. Why? Because the only reward they give their employees is a paycheck. The relationship between employer and employee never develops beyond that point. Successful organizations take a different approach. In exchange for the work a person gives, he receives not only a paycheck, but also nurturing from the people for whom he works. And nurturing has the ability to transform people’s lives.

The leader’s major responsibility in the nurturing process is modeling…leadership, a strong work ethic, responsibility, character, openness, consistency, communication and a belief in people. People seldom improve when they have no other model but themselves to copy.

Here are some things a leader must do to nurture the potential leaders around him:

1. Choose a Leadership Model for Yourself.

   Guidelines for a Mentoring Relationship:
   A. Ask the right questions.
   B. Clarify your level of expectations.
   C. Accept a subordinate, learning position.
   D. Respect the mentor, but don’t idolize him.
   E. Immediately put into effect what you are learning.
   F. Be disciplined in relating to the mentor.
   G. Reward your mentor with your own progress.
   H. Don’t threaten to give up.

2. Build Trust.

   Leadership can only function on the basis of trust. Trust is the glue that binds followers and leaders together. Trust implies accountability, predictability and reliability.
   T = Time. Take time to listen and give feedback on performance.
   R = Respect. Give the potential leader respect and he will return it with trust.
   U = Unconditional Positive Regard. Show acceptance of the person.
   S = Sensitivity. Anticipate the feelings and needs of the potential leader.
   T = Touch. Give encouragement – a handshake, high five or pat on the back.

Once people trust their leader as a person, they become able to trust his leadership.
3. **Show Transparency.**

   A study of 105 executives determined many of the characteristics shared by successful executives. One particular trait was identified as most valuable: They admitted their mistakes and accepted the consequences rather than trying to blame others.

4. **Offer Time.**

   Time spent with a potential leader is an investment.

5. **Believe in People.**

   When you believe in people, you motivate them to release their potential. People always grow toward their leader’s expectations, not his criticisms or examinations. Expectations promote progress.

6. **Give Encouragement.**

   Too many leaders expect their people to encourage themselves. But most people require outside encouragement to propel them forward. New leaders must be encouraged. Encouragement empowers them by giving them energy to continue when they make mistakes. Praise a person every time you see improvement.

7. **Exhibit Consistency.**

   When we are consistent, our people learn to trust us. They are able to grow and develop because they know what to expect from us. They can answer the questions: “What would my leader do in this situation?”

8. **Hold Hope High.**

   People will continue working, struggling, and trying if they have hope. Hope lifts morale. It improves self-image. It energizes people. It raises their expectations. It is the leader’s job to hold hope high, to instill it in the people he leads. “There are no hopeless situations: there are only men who have grown hopeless about them.” Maintaining hope comes from seeing the potential in every situation and staying positive in spite of the circumstances.

9. **Add Significance.**

   No one wants to spend his time doing work that is unimportant. It’s the leader’s job to add significance to the lives of the people he leads: One way to do this is to make them a part of something worthwhile. “To love what you do and feel that it matters, how could anything be more fun?”

   Another way to add significance to the lives of the people you lead is to show them the big picture and let them know how they contribute to it. Many people

People are never more insecure than when they become obsessed with their fears at the expense of their dreams. People who focus on their fears don’t grow. They become paralyzed. A potential leader who feels secure is more likely to take risks, try to excel, break new ground and succeed. Great leaders make their followers feel bigger than they are. Soon the followers begin to think, act and produce bigger than they are. Finally, they become what they think they are. One of the great discoveries a man makes, one of his great surprises, is to find he can do what he was afraid he couldn’t do.

11. Reward Production.

People rise to our level of expectation. They try to give us what we reward. If you want people to produce, then you must reward production. Often people find reward, not only in money, but in personal recognition of their production.

12. Establish a Support System.

A. Emotional Support. Provide a “Yes, you can” atmosphere. This support costs the least and yields an incredible return.

B. Skills Training. One of the fastest ways to build people up is to train them. People receiving training perceive that the organization believes in them and they are more productive because they are more highly skilled.

C. Money. Stingy leaders produce stingy workers. It is difficult for people to give of themselves when their leader doesn’t give of himself. Invest money in people; it always yields the highest return on your investment.

D. Equipment. Investing in the right equipment will give your people the time to be more productive, and it will keep up the morale.

E. Personnel. Provide the people needed to get the job done.


Leaders must be good at judging others. It is important to disciple a life, not teach a lesson. Discipleship of another person involves discerning where that person is, knowing where he is supposed to go, and giving him what he needs to go there.