

Transforming Your Employees Through Dynamic Leadership

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"You deliver for me, and I'll deliver for you." that's one type of leadership. Historian and political analyst James MacGregor Burns defines such leadership as "transactional." In his book "Leadership," Mr. Burns devotes several hundred pages to the differences between a run-of-the-mill "transactional" leader and what he calls an exceptional, charismatic, "transforming" leader.

In the transactional relationship, the end result is a "payoff." In the transforming relationship, the end result is a substantial change in the subordinate: personal growth. The former provides only material reward; the latter provides psychic income.

Gen. George C. Marshall advised his colleagues to develop people toward self-reliance. "If you want a man to be for you," he said, "never let him feel he is dependent on you. Make him feel you are in some way dependent on him." And the best way to do that is to teach him to stand on his own feet.

The would-be transforming leader does not always succeed. Some people are unalterably dependent and incapable of growth. As one cynic puts it, "You can't grow grass on concrete." We talked with executives who saw themselves as the beneficiaries of such leadership. They describe their experiences in terms that lend themselves to six imperatives:

1. **Show a personal interest in individual progress.** The transforming leader studies and understands his people, knowing not only their current abilities but their potential. Lyman Wood, president of Brennan College Services Inc., says the transforming leader pushes people beyond the threshold of their self-imposed limits toward their own unrealized potential.

Unquestionably the transforming leader must begin with a sound knowledge of the employee's character and potential. Elwood L. LaForge Jr., corporate group vice president of Lenox Inc., recalls an executive who helped shape his career: "He always gave me enough rope to show what I had, but never enough to hang myself. And he was always there with the lifeline when I needed it."

2. **Build charismatic relationships.** The term charisma derives from a Greek word representing a divine element and therefore is beyond definition. But the behavior of the charismatic leader can be described: He creates confidence in his judgment, competence and good will. Followers identify with him. They feel they can be sure of his availability when they need him. He makes tasks interesting, exudes purposefulness, generates a feeling of venturesomeness and stirs excitement.

He is not necessarily humorous or intellectual, but he is personable. People like to be with him because he respects their individuality. But most important, he sets an example that others want to emulate.

3. **Encourage other people to shine.** The transforming leader keeps them on a loose rein, even though he expects them to commit some errors as part of the growth process.

The effective leader looks for opportunities to express sincere appreciation. One executive recalls the thrill he experienced when his superior congratulated him on his skill in selecting subordinates: "Where did you get Stevens? He's a real find!" E. Garrett Bewkes Jr., chairman of American Bakeries Co., warns against what he terms "the counterfeit transforming leader." In one way or another, "he makes you want to break your back on his behalf, but after you've been with him a month you find it's all facade and he doesn't really sustain the

role."

- 4. Provide psychological support.** To turn the transactional relationship into a transforming experience, the leader must make a conscious effort to elevate the subordinate. The objective is to raise the individual's level of aspirations and strengthen self-confidence.

Robert A.M. Copenrath, president of Agfa-Gevaert Inc., puts it this way: "The transforming leader, as you call him, removes fear. It's like a frog in the pond; the leader gets the frog to make the jump."

But the effect may well be to spread illusions if all the leader does is to raise sights and inflate confidence. He must also raise the individual's ability to perform. That is why an additional step must be taken: The leader must instruct, provide training and facilities, and improve the conditions in which the tasks are to be performed.

- 5. Ask questions-but in a special way.** The purpose is to draw out more of what the individual has in him. Walter Liss, president of the Broadcast division of Cox Communications Inc., recalling what his mentor did for him, emphasizes the distinction:

"The questions are not designed just to find out what you know, but to stimulate you to explore new options. The questions that made a difference to me were like the work of a cubist painter who forces you simultaneously to look at every side of the object. The questions must be such that they don't allow you to settle for the obvious."

- 6. Keep people informed.** The purpose is not just to load them with more facts, relevant and irrelevant, but to enlarge their perception and get them to explore further.

Thus, the transforming leader gets his followers to look at problems from a fresh angle and with new purposes. This requires that he keep his people informed about his own values and priorities.

In the real world, however, no leader can afford to be Johnny-One-Note. There are times when he must be transactional: People do have a right to expect material rewards for services rendered. Moreover, issues of status may make a difference. The pressures of daily life may permit the executive to be transforming with his immediate staff and compel him to be more transactional with people down the line or out in the field. But the awareness of what style he is practicing, and under what circumstances, will enhance his leadership skills.

The rewards of transforming leadership are many: President Truman, who acknowledged such leadership in his general. George Marshall, said of him: "I sincerely hope that when it comes my time to cross the great river, Marshall will place me on his staff, so that I may try to do for him what he did for me."

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