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The IdeaBridge White Paper Series:
The Leadership Series:
Building Loyalty and Trust

THE LEADERSHIP SERIES: BUILDING LOYALTY AND TRUST

Summary

This article deals with the Leader's necessity to have strong coalitions of support in order to ensure that his initiatives will be addressed with passion and vigor. Having strong coalitions of loyal supporters is also necessary to stave off the occasional political attacks from those who are less than delighted with the changes or initiatives sponsored by the Leader. This is a must-read for political survival!

Earning Trust, Loyalty and Coalitions of Support

- Trust is the single most important factor in building personal and professional relationships. Trust implies accountability, predictability, and reliability. More than anything else, followers want to believe in and trust their Leaders. People first must believe in you before they will follow your leadership.

- Loyalty must be earned. It is earned by caring about and protecting both subordinates and bosses. It is earned by working with people and helping them be successful. The loyalty and dedication of subordinates can help Leaders meet tight deadlines or solve difficult problems. The loyalty of a boss can get Leaders out of potential trouble.

- You can buy a man's time, you can even buy his physical presence at a given place, but you cannot enthusiasm...you cannot buy loyalty...you cannot buy the devotion of hearts, minds or souls. You must earn these.

- Leaders must trust and accept the people they lead; such acceptance requires tolerance of imperfection. Anybody can lead perfect people.

- Leaders create an environment of respect and loyalty. No one wants to let them down and most want to meet or exceed their expectations.

- Leaders that place a high premium on building loyalty, create environments where membership lasts for life.

- Trust must be built day-by-day. It calls for consistency. Some of the ways a Leader can betray trust include: breaking promises, gossiping, withholding information and being duplicitous.

- Trust allows team members to begin working as a single unit, to begin accomplishing the things together they recognize as important. Once the players know and trust one another, and develop a fit, the team's personality will begin to emerge.

- Leadership isn't about convenience. You have an obligation to serve. They trust you'll be there when they need you, late nights, early mornings, even weekends and holidays.

- You must establish productive working relationships and build credibility as soon as possible. These relationships are essential for getting things done and getting support for your leadership initiatives.

- You must take the time to take the organizational pulse to learn what will work and what won't. Before you come out with new, sweeping initiatives, first understand if the culture is ready for these changes. If it's too much, too soon, watch out!

- You must build a supportive coalition which is capable of overcoming resistance to the cultural changes that you will be demanding within the first 100 days and beyond.
- You must adapt your style to what the company is ready for and can take. For example, they may not be ready for the Rubber Chicken, or the Battlefield Pep Talk or the halftime locker room chew out.
- Tailor the approach to suit the audience, the culture and the situation.
- The support of the Chairman and Board, even in combination with the formal authority to allocate resources and make decisions, is not enough to make change happen. You must build an internal and external coalition of political support for your change initiatives. Failure to do so almost universally results in the Leader being FIRED!
- The secret to most turnaround successes is the ability to get people focused and working as a team toward common objectives. You also have to have the strength to persevere in defining the right thing to do, and people have to believe in you. That takes credibility, sincerity and the ability to earn respect while executing the tough calls.
- New leaders must quickly create momentum for change by tailoring their approaches to fit the technical, political, and cultural situations they enter. Momentum is created by securing early wins and building strong personal credibility and supportive coalitions.
- It's important for the leader to solidify the support of subordinates early-on, because they understand the company and hold the keys to making the changes happen quickly.
- You must work incredibly hard to quickly build internal and external coalitions of support that will rally behind your change initiatives.
- Despite your talent and proven record of consistent success at other companies, if you cannot earn the support, loyalty and respect of your subordinates and senior team, you will be FIRED by the board. It's as simple as that. Any Questions?
- Don't try and sell people. Build relationships first!
- The right to lead the company must be earned from key subordinates.
- Gaining acceptance for big changes can be a huge challenge. Further, every move, action, speech, conversation, meeting and initiative will be carefully analyzed for hidden meaning or ulterior motive. People won't take you at face value until you have proven to be trustworthy.
- Personal credibility emerges from a myriad of decisions, actions, interactions, memos, reactions to emergencies and unexpected problems…like it or not, you are always on display and they pick up on the most subtle of nuances. Credibility is the result of a slow process of accretion as your conduct is observed over time.
- Say to your senior team, "I want you in front of your people to show public support for these plans. You had your chance to change the plans and give me input. Now it's time for you to step up and lead your people, not just sit there like one more member of the audience. You are the leaders of this company and you have to stand up and start taking that leadership role. Beginning right now."

- You must show the people that you've inherited that you have some respect for their judgment, thoughts and ideas. You've got to show them that you will give them a shot of being on your team.

- Criticizing past efforts or programs can easily come across as self-serving and can cause the people to become angry adversaries looking for the first opportunity to sabotage whatever you are trying to do. Watch out!

- Never make sweeping changes without first running them by the major internal and external constituencies…pre-sell them on your ideas. If they don't like the plans, maybe they can help you make them better.

- The leader's actions will be widely communicated, told and retold, becoming stories and legends within the company. These stories will powerfully shape the beliefs of people within the company…either positively or negatively.

- Credibility is essential to mobilize the energy of the staff. But it's hard to build, easy to lose and difficult to regain once lost. To build credibility, you must come to be seen as having the judgment, values, energy and wisdom to take people to unfamiliar territory.

- Some people in the company will just naturally have more influence over the staff. People just tend to go to them for answers, support, opinions, etc. Try to find those natural thought leaders and influencers. They are a wealth of critical information.

- Your goal should be to build winning coalitions and prevent the formation of blocking coalitions. Managing cultural change involves the hard work of building winning coalitions with the power to take action and the robustness to survive the inevitable opposition to change. Leaders must also forestall the formation of blocking coalitions by those seeking to protect the status quo. All these challenges require figuring out who will offer support and who will raise opposition.

- The leader must analyze the various political arenas: top management, middle management, the Board and the workforce. The leader must cultivate and retain the confidence of these key groups, and with his boss. The support of one or two of the most influential senior managers can make a huge difference, and this support may be enhanced if the leader helps them to promote a critical project or cause.

- Assessing pivotal people's sources of power involves assessing the resources at their command and the nature of the people who follow them. Does she have a monopoly over the flow of information? Do others take cues from him? Does he have the power to distribute or withhold desirable rewards, or does she control resources that others need? Does she control large or important sectors of the company? Has she built up a reservoir of loyalty or indebtedness by protecting others and helping them? Does this person have an "in" with the Board and therefore is untouchable? Who in the company is untouchable? It's best to find out early!

- People who have reasons to resist change don't necessarily do so openly or directly. Your efforts can be seriously jeopardized if others can prevent you from learning, securing early wins, laying a foundation and building credibility. Key people may withhold support or resources by not providing the full story. More subtly, they may express alarm in private meetings with their peers and subordinates about the risks inherent in your proposal; this is called "subtle sabotage."

- Resistance may arise later when the Leader begins to articulate a vision and initiate deeper changes for the company. A standoff may force the Leader to use blunt power of position to squash resistance, and perhaps ultimately to fire those who persist to be stubbornly opposed. The leader should seek to avoid such a no-win confrontation by building a powerful coalition of support. However, it is rare for any company to undergo cultural change without senior-level people getting fired or pushed aside…this is just the reality. But using aggressive tactics against those who disagree with you will label you as a tyrant and a bully.

- Being new to the company, the leader lacks a reservoir of obligation, returned favors and support from which to draw. He must accumulate political capital before he can hope to secure support for his key initiatives. One does so in part by achieving some early wins and channeling the resulting support into broader initiatives. Another necessary step is to help others in strategic positions advance their own agendas in exchange for their support of yours.

- When you face political opposition, it usually means that your solution or proposal has negative implications for someone in the company. So politics is just people acting in their own self-protective interests. To work through the politics, you must think about how your solution affects the players in the company. Then you must build a consensus for change that takes into account all of the factors driving the politics. Consensus building may require you to change your solutions to make it acceptable. Remember that politics is the art of the possible, and it's no good devising the ideal solution if the rank and file refuse to execute the changes.