

5 Leadership Attributes that Ignite Extraordinary Results

MIKE EVANS

Award-Winning
Speaker & Author

“Leaders are born...not made!” How many of us have heard this often repeated myth? The truth however, is far different. Exemplary leadership is the result of consistent action, and focus over time on a few simple principles. It is a process. It involves practices, skills, and abilities; and they are not for the chosen few. They can be learned, refined and perfected.

Decades of research have identified a few key attributes that are the foundation for success of the most effective leaders. These traits are not complicated—they don’t require an advanced degree or any specialized training. They are straightforward, practical and will significantly and directly impact organizational performance.

By exhibiting these five leadership attributes, you can ignite extraordinary performance and results within your organization.

- 1. Model the Way—Walk the Talk**
- 2. Inspire a Clear and Shared Vision of the Future**
- 3. Be Open to and Seek the Perspectives of Others**
- 4. Enable and Empower Others to Exercise Action**
- 5. Celebrate, Encourage and Appreciate**

It is important to understand regarding these attributes that it’s about frequency – not how well or skilled a leader may be with each of these. With focus, leaders will strengthen their ability and become more accomplished with each over time.

Model The Way – Walk The Talk: As a leader, you are being thoroughly scrutinized at all times. Every word you utter, every signal you send through your body language and the tonality of your voice, and most importantly the congruency between what you say and what you do. The quickest way to derail even the most eloquently and inspiring communication of a new key strategy or key initiative is to behave in a manner that does not mirror the message.

Consider the following: Are you demonstrating through your actions and the experiences you are creating for those around you the same urgency and engagement you expect from them? Are your actions vividly and tellingly indicating to those you lead your degree of involvement, interest and commitment? Are you and other senior leaders openly and consistently displaying your alignment and commitment, or is there even a hint of dissension or discord?

Inspire a Clear and Shared Vision of the Future: You need not possess exemplary oratory skills or be as compelling as Martin Luther King or as motivating as Tony Robbins. Employees want a leader who can plainly paint a clear picture of the future, as well as how that future benefits every employee, team and stakeholder. This is not a one and done deal. That vision must be consistently communicated as often, and in as many formats and using as many vehicles as possible. When performed effectively, employees will voluntarily engage and choose to go above and beyond what is required to help achieve the vision. When the vision is vague, cloudy or unclear, employees often feel frustrated, stressed, and anxious. This leads to misunderstandings, confusion, excuse-making and a focus on ‘keeping busy’ rather than a focus on the ‘must-achieve desired results.’

Consider the following: How compelling is your vision – whether you lead a team of 12 or an organization of 12,000 – to all members of the team? Can those you lead, see themselves in that future (it is difficult to act in manner incongruent with how one views themselves in the future)? How often do you communicate your vision? Can those you lead articulate the vision as clearly and plainly as you? How much time do you spend telling people what to do and how to do it, because that is a red-flag? Do your employees possess a can-do mindset and individually consider, “what else can I do?” to ensure the vision is realized? Can employees at all levels see how achieving the vision will help them professionally? Personally? How it benefits their team? The Organization? All stakeholders?

Be Open To and Seek the Perspectives of Others: In corporate America, and in most organizations, teams do not make decisions, leaders make decisions. However, the most effective leaders are certain to obtain as many perspectives as possible prior to making a decision. The key reasoning behind this is – no one person can see all there is to see. No matter how skilled, or educated you may be, you simply cannot see every possibility, opportunity, obstacle or challenge.

Every human being sees the world differently. By being open to the perspectives of others, it enables leaders to make better-informed decisions. Additionally, when those you lead feel they have been heard, they are much more likely to engage – even if they did not get their way. No involvement often leads to no commitment. People do not have their way, but they want to have their say. Leaders that are most trusted by those they lead are open to perspectives of others, communicate openly and candidly, ask for and offer feedback, and are willing to address the elephant in the room.

Consider the following: How often have you made decisions without seeking insight from a variety of other sources (employees, partners, vendors, customers, etc.)? If someone were to ask those you lead how involved they are in new strategies, initiatives and change efforts, how would they reply? In the last week, how many of your employees have you asked to provide you feedback? How often do you personally engage employees at all levels of the organization to ask what the organization can do to improve? Do you currently have the levels of trust, collaboration and teamwork that you desire? When was the last time someone other than a direct report volunteered a new idea or his or her point of view?

Enable and Empower Others to Exercise Action: Top leaders create a winnable game for their employees by helping them become clear on what is most important - the vision of the future – and involving them in determining how to most effectively play the game. Employees are most engaged in their work when they believe they are playing a game they can win. Once the desired results are identified, leaders must be sure to establish a starting line (a metric of where we stand today), a finish line (a metric of where we need to be) and a deadline (by when). This formula becomes the LAG measure that must be achieved. Together, leaders and employees then work together to identify the

LEAD measures (actions and behaviors) that are predictive and influence-able that will produce the desired result. Exemplary leaders understand that those closest to the work often have the most impactful and innovative ideas about how to improve operations, systems and processes. Leaders must be ready willing and able to remove obstacles and barriers that impede progress.

Consider the following: Are those you lead so clear on what is most important, how it is being measured, and the results you must achieve that they are able to self-select the appropriate actions to achieve it?

How many of those you lead are proactive and find new ways of producing desired results? How many of those you lead wait to be told what to do? How often do team members volunteer to become involved in key projects? Are your employees proactive in searching out solutions when confronted with barriers or obstacles?

Celebrate, Encourage and Appreciate: The deepest craving of human beings is the need to be appreciated. When individuals or teams receive sincere appreciative feedback, they will exhibit that particular behavior more often and to a deeper degree. Think about the last time someone offered you appreciative feedback. More than likely, any time you interact with that person you think about that feedback. Top leaders will ‘water what they want to see grow.’ In other words, they will provide appreciative feedback on the behaviors and actions that will accelerate the team’s ability to achieve desired results. However, that appreciative feedback, in and of itself, is not enough. In addition to knowing what one is doing well (appreciative feedback) they must know how they can become even more effective (constructive feedback). Do not confuse this simple feedback process (Appreciative – what you are doing well/Constructive – what I think you can do to be even better) with ‘constructive criticism,’ which is an oxymoron. The combination of both (appreciative/constructive) helps people grow and develop.

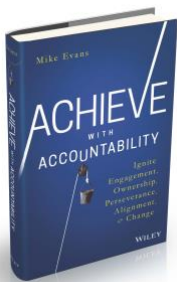
Many goals and strategies that are vitally important take months or years to achieve. Celebrating short-term wins is important for esprit de corps and to convert the skeptics. Folks need to feel and see that progress is being made toward the desired vision.

Consider the following: When offering feedback to employees, do you focus primarily on what they are doing wrong, what they are doing well, or a combination of both? What are the behaviors that will accelerate achievement of your desired results and how often do you offer appreciative feedback to those that exhibit those specific behaviors and actions? How did you celebrate the last significant win by your team or a team member? Was it done publicly? How many of your employees truly feel valued in the workplace?

About The Speaker/Author:

Mike Evans is an award-winning author/speaker and has developed a unique perspective from 20+ years of working alongside a star studded list of world-renowned thought leaders, including: Dr. John Kotter, Dr.

Stephen Covey, Tom Peters, Jim Kouzes, Hyrum Smith, Steve Farber and Chris McChesney. Mike served in executive leadership and consulting roles with Kotter International, FranklinCovey, and Tom Peters Company.



In addition to being a leading authority on ***Unleashing Personal and Organizational Accountability***, clients rely upon Mike's solutions to; ***Accelerate Change, Shape Their Optimal Culture, Flawlessly Execute Key Strategies, Ignite Leadership Capacity at all Levels, Amplify Employee Engagement, Thrive and Excel in the Age of***

Disruption, Embrace The Role of CEO of Your Life, Career and Destiny, and Cultivate Peak Performance.

31 of Fortune 50 are clients. Mike works with organizations around the globe and in virtually every arena, from the tech sector to financial services, manufacturing, health care, hospitality, entertainment, retail, and the US Government. Clients include: Intel, Capital One, Apple, Caterpillar, PNC Bank, Cargill, Pfizer, General Mills, H&R Block, The United States Navy, John Deere, Fidelity Investments, Monsanto, Google, US Steel, Rite Aid, Agilent Technologies, Johnson & Johnson, Symantec, Cigna Corporation, ITPA, US Department of Commerce, BNY Mellon, Oracle, Astra Zeneca, Baxter International Inc., Shell Oil, UPMC, Citrus Valley Health, McAfee, American Airlines, Masonite, Novartis, Ernst & Young, ACE Hardware, DuPont USA, Quest Diagnostics, State Farm, BP Oil, Heinz USA, NAFCU, and NASA.