ONLEADERSHIP

By Wayne D. Andrews

I'm often asked by students and others, "What are the keys to being a successful leader?"

My response has been to say that much has been written on the subject, and there are many fine leaders one can observe in order to derive answers to this question. Having said that, I believe there are five key ideas worthy of sharing that define high performing leaders.

First, great leaders live and lead by a set of principles that guide their lives. I characterize this as a "moral code"—one that is multi-faceted and means that leaders know themselves and are comfortable in their own skin. Moreover, it requires that successful leaders:

- Believe that people come first and treat everyone with dignity and respect;
- Act with integrity; are trustworthy;
- Ensure that their behavior is above reproach; and
- Commit to giving credit for good work (a successful leader knows there is no limit to what can be accomplished if it doesn't matter who receives credit).

Second, great leaders have vision and are relentless in communicating this vision to others. For any organization, the statement of vision is about understanding that which it wishes to become in the future. It's a lofty ideal about a journey to a destination that barely seems attainable. The vision is a rallying cry to mobilize people to pull together in the same direction. Great leaders articulate the statement of vision clearly and frequently.

Third, great leaders know that vision without action is meaningless. Vision must be accompanied by planning and execution. I remind our people regularly that we must develop the plans, work the plans, evaluate our successes, make adjustments, and start the cycle over again. Many organizations struggle because planning and execution are not well developed.

Fourth, great leaders are accountable to others and hold others accountable. Organizations thrive when people know they can rely on one another, and reliance is an essential part of accountability. But there is more. Accountability means:

- Getting work done in a timely and professional manner;
- Using data to inform decision making; and
- Being open, frank and respectful of the opinions of others.

Fifth, great leaders understand the importance of relationships. As the old adage says, "We are often judged by the company we keep." Great leaders pay careful attention

to the individuals with whom they associate. People can lift us up or bring us down; help bring out the best in us, or the worst; and influence our thinking in a variety of ways. As a result, great leaders guard the company they keep.

At Morehead State University, we have taken becoming a successful leader one step further. To prepare future leaders, we established the President's Leadership Academy a few years ago to provide quality professional development experiences to nominated and selected faculty, staff and administrators. This yearlong program includes reading assignments, discussion groups, interaction with various campus units, as well as special topic seminars and visits to Kentucky educational bodies and other postsecondary education institutions. Perhaps most importantly, high performing leaders from across Kentucky and elsewhere are invited to campus to relate their experiences on how to become a successful leader. These presenters have included former governors, university presidents and public officials.

Finally, I'll summarize my thoughts by quoting John C. Maxwell, a noted author on leadership, who described it best when he said, "A leader is one who knows the way . . . goes the way . . . and shows the way."

Good luck in all of your leadership ventures.

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