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"Quotes"

"There is as much difference between the counsel that a friend giveth, and that a man giveth himself, as there is between the counsel of a friend and of a flatterer. For there is no such flatterer as is a man's self."
~Francis Bacon

"I'm going from doing all of the work to having to delegate the work - which is almost harder for me than doing the work myself. I'm a lousy delegator, but I'm learning."
~Alton Brown

"Some expect CEOs to be chained to the desk. Most put in 12 or more hours a day, often working seven days a week. But we should want leaders in high-pressure situations to have time to decompress."
~John Challenger

"We're training you to be a leader, but you're not going to be a leader right away. You need to be a good follower and work your way into leadership."
~John Davis

"I made my own assessment of my life, and I began to live it. That was freedom."
~Fernando Flores

"Learn from your mistakes, always self-evaluate. Great leaders are thinking, evolving."
~Jeremy Foley

Dear Friend,

Follow the Leader

I grew up in a very different world than the one our children live in today. For one thing, we spent far more time outside. Hot or cold, it didn't really matter. We were sent outside to get some fresh air. Even bookworms, like me, were shooed out of the house (even if it was with book in hand).

When I did come off of the porch to play, one of my favorite games was "Follow the Leader". It was fun to watch closely and do my best to mimic the actions of the person chosen as leader for that round. But, ultimately, everybody wanted to be *leader*! There was nothing like coming up with new twists and turns, ways to try to stump the unsuspecting friends...your default followers...as they tried to keep up with you.

We didn't think about it then, but that game is kind of sad. It's all about the leader. The poor followers have to try to keep up, or they're out. Though we're adults now, how often do we still proceed in "Follow the Leader" mode? There's little or no thought to how we're functioning in the leadership role or how our behavior influences those around us.

Well, in this month's edition of *EA Insights*, it's still all about the leader, but in a slightly more responsible way. Let's consider three critical questions leaders should ask themselves periodically to monitor how they're doing. For this, it doesn't matter if you're a leader of 1 or of 100,000. Every leader needs to look in the mirror on occasion and make corrections, as needed.

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
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3 Critical Self-Assessment Questions for Leaders

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When you think about leadership, what immediately comes to mind?

- Is it having a group (large or small) following you?
- Is it the prestige and perks that sometimes accompany the role?
- Is it the burden of having responsibility for others?



One thing that may *not* make the list is the need for constant self-assessment and development. You see, the most effective leaders are people who continually look inward so that they can stay sharp and be their best in the leadership roles they hold.

With that in mind, here are three questions to ask yourself (and to answer honestly) from time-to-time about yourself as a leader. Your responses can have a direct impact on your success and your sanity.

Question 1: Do you pause (and seek wise counsel) periodically to set personal and group direction?



I know. There's so much to be done that there's really no time to stop and plan. NOT! In actuality, there's so much to be done that you can't afford *not* to stop periodically to plan or regroup.

It never ceases to amaze me how many times people...leaders...are working hard...putting in long hours, but investing that time and energy in pursuits that aren't terribly important currently or that are being done in ways that are outdated or unnecessarily cumbersome.

Why is that?

Often, this happens because leaders have a short-sighted view that focuses them only on what must be accomplished. While attention to getting things done is absolutely important, the question is how they go about doing so. If they board the "gotta do" train, without critically examining whether they're tackling the right work in the right way at the right time, then they could find themselves working hard but perhaps not smart.

A second reason a leader may end up spinning his own (or his group's) wheels is that he exists in a vacuum. That Lone Ranger mentality, though great for the movies, can be murder in real life. We were not meant to go it alone. There's such value in bouncing ideas off of an advisor, seeing an issue from a perspective that's different from yours, or taking advantage of another's experience to speed your learning curve or to save you from preventable pitfalls.

So, leader, are you making the most of planning time and the trusted thought partner(s) that are available to you?

Question 2: Are you doing too much?

So many people break into leadership because they are tremendous DOERS. They're the ones who are faithful...there early...hanging in til the lights go out. They see a need and, instead of looking around for someone else to step up to do something about it, instinctively they just move into action mode. Am I right?



Here's the concern, though. If, as a leader, you're constantly doing, what's the impact? Believe me, there is an impact.

- Burnout for yourself
- Followers who never get a chance to develop skills
- Group members who are under-engaged because they haven't had to assume responsibility
- Personal resentment because you're doing all the work and everyone else is sitting back and watching

So, leader is your DOING getting in the way? It may be time to do less doing and to invest more in teaching, delegating, and coaching so that you're building (and building into) the team around you.



Question 3: How are you following?

No, this isn't a typo. Think about how you follow.

It's very easy for some folks to be in charge. Yet, those same folks may have a very hard time coming under the authority of another. That's a BIG problem. You see, you may be

a leader in one situation or context, but you also are a follower in another. And, people are watching...not just how you *lead* but also how you *follow*.

Whether you're a team leader who responds to a project director, a department director who answers to an executive, or an executive who must check in with a board, it's important to consider how you demonstrate followership. This can't be one of those "Do as I say do, not as I do" moments. It will be hard to set expectations regarding authority, protocol, or respect with the members of your group if you are acting in a contrary manner toward those to whom you report.

So, leader, how good a follower are you?

Great leaders regularly conduct a personal check in to see how they're doing. And, they are not afraid to make changes when they identify an area that's ripe for growth. So, how are you doing today, and where do you need to tweak?

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"Good leaders must first become good servants."

~Robert Greenleaf

"Doing what's right isn't the problem. It is knowing what's right."

~Lyndon Johnson

"Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now."

~Alan Lakein

"Leadership is an active role 'lead' is a verb. But the leader who tries to do it all is headed for burnout, and in a powerful hurry."

~Bill Owens

"Respect starts with yourself."

~Proverb

"Whatever road I take, the guiding star is within me the guiding star and the loadstone which point the way. They point in but one direction. They point to me."

~Ayn Rand

"Surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority, and don't interfere as long as the policy you've decided upon is being carried out."

~Ronald Reagan

"At this particular juncture I think what you want is as much honest counsel as you can get."

~Tony Snow

"The idea that I'm trying to get across is that we're always planning for the future. And the future arrives, whether we want it to or not."

~Eric Taylor

"As punishment for my contempt for authority, Fate has made me an authority myself."

~Unknown

About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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