

CHOICES Leaders Make

Everyday we make lots and lots of choices. When we get up in the morning, we decide what clothes we will wear and what we will eat for breakfast. We decide the time we will leave for work. As we arrive at work, we choose the tasks we will do and the order in which we attempt to do them.

In making choices, we exercise some important options. We demonstrate our power. Only you can choose what you will say, do, or attempt in any give day. Yet, as you make that choice, you are putting into action your ability to influence the world.

Also, by making a choice, you are exercising your freedom. You can decide. You can put that decision into action. It is yours to make. No one else can do that for you.

Leaders make choices. Some of these make a positive impact on their effectiveness as a leader. Some of them make a very negative impact on that same ability to lead.

Here are some choices that I consider to be especially important:

1. Being a caring person. Employees want to know how much you care before they are interested in what you know. This decision is critical because it raises questions of how much to care and what is appropriate. You can make a lot of mistakes as long as employees believe you have their best interests in mind. Show them that you care.
2. Being honest. Honesty is a simple word with profound implications for leaders. Most leaders believe they are honest. In their words, they probably are. In their actions, they may not be. If you tell an employee you will do something, but you don't actually do it, you just broke a promise. Honesty raises questions about making and keeping promises, following through on commitments, and being reliable.
3. Taking ownership. There is something inspiring about a person who will accept responsibility for his or her words, actions and attitude.
4. Living and working with integrity. This word has some moral implications to it. It basically means the person is trustworthy. It has another meaning that can be applied to the work place: consistent. In musical terms, it means that a leader's words and actions harmonize with each other. Often, when your words say one thing and your actions another, then your leadership is "out of tune".
5. Showing respect. Respect means you value other people. You demonstrate respect by listening to their views, valuing their contributions, and giving them your attention. It also implies that you are tolerant of differing viewpoints and accept diversity of opinion or thought as a strength.
6. Setting a high standard for performance. Mediocre leaders set mediocre standards. Great leaders expect more. They expect more out employees' talent,

time and work. If you set a high standard, then it is important to practice a high standard.

7. Showing some spirit. Work isn't all tasks and responsibilities. It is an experience. Any experience can be made more pleasurable by adding spirit to it. Spirit includes creativity, joy, and fun. It is perfectly acceptable to work *and* have a good time!

Are these the only choices a leader makes? No! These are some of the basics. Get these right, and you are moving in the right direction toward being a more effective person and leader.