

Organizational Leadership: Three Principles for Higher Effectiveness

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As a US Marine aviator, business owner, and consultant, I have dedicated many years to honing my leadership and development skills—both organizational and personal. In my experience and in interviews with over a hundred successful leaders, I discovered three simple principles that, when properly applied, will make the leadership journey incredibly rewarding.

1. It is all about you.
2. It is all about them.
3. It is all about the organization.

If you cannot, or will not, lead and develop yourself, you cannot lead and develop others.

It Is All About You

You must make the conscious choice to accept the leadership role. It is not enough to occupy a position of leadership (as defined by a box on the organization chart with your name on it). Many people have made the choice to lead, exercising vast influence, without being in a so-called "leadership" position. In making the choice to lead, you take responsibility for yourself first, which means you must commit to working on your own personal and professional development. If you cannot, or will not, lead and develop yourself, you cannot lead and develop others. You must recognize that you will take some hits in your visible leadership role but you must also not shy away from them. You must realize that your decisions may not always be popular, but understand this comes with the territory. You will discover the rewards of leading are well worth it.

This first principle requires mastery of three essential elements:

1. Integrity: Do you deliver on your commitments?
2. Technical competence: Do you understand the tasks?
3. Setting the example: Are you a proper role model?

Once you accept the first principle and embrace these three elements, you are ready to move on to the next principle.

It Is All About Them

In this case, *them* refers to those we lead. Your purpose as a leader is to engage and motivate your employees to bring 100 percent of themselves to work, every day. As their leader, it is your responsibility to create the right environment for them to motivate themselves and to exceed your expectations. Your focus should be on helping people perform more effectively and efficiently. This helps *them* become more productive and advance in their careers. It also shows that you care about them.

The three essential elements of this principle are:

1. Self-awareness: Do you know what you do well?
2. Taking care of people: Do you look out for them?
3. Developing new leaders: Do you help people advance?

Applied properly, this principle will help you in the long run as your employees become more efficient, more productive, and more effective. They will require less supervision, which brings us to the third principle.

It Is All About the Organization

There are unethical and misguided bosses who think the organization exists to support them. This arrogance ultimately brings failure. We come together in associations or businesses to accomplish something that we could not accomplish alone. Your employees give you their time and you compensate them with standard benefits. As a leader within your organization, you must recognize that you are part of the organization, but not the organization itself.

Investing your ego and ambition in your job is fine—to a point. In the extreme, this creates an overbearing autocrat. The truly effective leader knows he or she is an active member within the team and always works to better the team. Real leaders have a forward-looking orientation and work to build the culture of their group. It is the insecure leader who wants his or her successor to fail. Any leader who fails to support an employee—for any reason—hurts the organization.

The essential three elements of this principle are:

1. Commander's intent: Where are we going and why?
2. Culture and Values: What makes this place tick?
3. Practice: Do we work to get better at what we do?

Clearly, there are many layers to each of these principles. The first step to higher leadership effectiveness is to make the choice to be a leader. Then, focus on your people and help them succeed. Together, you can successfully advance your organization into the future you articulate. Once you embrace these three principles, you are on your way to becoming a truly successful organizational leader.

Mr. Adamchik is author of the book, *No Yelling: The 9 Secrets of Marine Corps Leadership You Must Know to Win in Business*, FireStarter Speaking and Consulting (Sept. 1, 2006).

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