

# EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

*the fundamentals of good administration*

Years ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson summarized the basis of executive leadership when he stated:

The man who knows how, will always have a job. The man who knows why will always be his boss. As to methods there may be a million and then some, but principles are few. The man who grasps principles can successfully select his own methods. The man who tries methods, ignoring principles, is sure to have trouble.

This raises an important question: Just what are the fundamental principles behind good administration?

This article will deal with five:

1. Know your job
2. Be sincere
3. Know your personnel
4. Be decisive
5. Communicate

## KNOW YOUR JOB

Certainly no one will remain in a post of leadership very long unless he has ability. It is the duty of every leader to evaluate himself and to recognize his strengths and weaknesses. He must continually seek to improve himself professionally. Probably no factor is more important to the executive than the ability to organize. Disorganization leads to chaos. The able administrator must *first* see a purpose, *then* devise a plan. He must learn to draw his subordinates into the planning stage by getting them to feel a need for action. With good organization, the entire group will work with the leader and will be *led* not *pushed* into action. Goals must be made clear and accomplishment of the goals must provide satisfaction. When the challenge is great enough, individuals will forget personal differences and cooperate on any given project.

## BE SINCERE

To paraphrase Socrates, the surest way to live with honor in the world is to be what we would appear to be.

In other words, the only way to appear sincere is to be sincere. Anything less may get by for a time, but not for long. Sincerity is so essential to character that if this trait is missing, all the knowledge in the world will sooner or later prove inadequate. Temporizing with principles may secure a temporary advantage, but in the long run high standards of sincerity will serve to better advantage.

## KNOW YOUR PERSONNEL

The true leader will observe his subordinates frequently and share in their work and in their problems. In this way he can obtain a better understanding of how they function under various conditions. The successful leader knows the human side of management. He does not depend upon his position of authority, but utilizes his knowledge to influence others to willingly cooperate. We can thus see that the true leader must have the ability to generate sound ideas. He must have faith that he and his associates can carry their ideas to fruition. He must supervise in a humane rather than authoritarian manner.

Able administrators find the committee an excellent instrument for shaping policy. They are careful, however, to give the committee a job within its capabilities and one in which it is interested. A committee should not be given a task which will prove too cumbersome and time consuming for its members. Under such circumstances, the members of the committee may become frustrated and lose interest in the cooperative approach to problem solving.

One of the most important reasons for using the committee should be to promote desirable growth on the part of the participants. Every leader should consider the development of teamwork to be one of his duties. Each member of the group should feel that he is part of a larger group working toward a common goal. This intangible feeling, sometimes called

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“esprit de corps” or “group spirit,” will enable any group to accomplish more.

### BE DECISIVE

A leader must be able to reason logically under the most trying conditions. Opportunities must be utilized as they arise. The administrator who vacillates creates lack of confidence, hesitancy, and indecision amongst his subordinates. The ability to make a rapid estimate of the situation and to arrive at a sound decision is essential to good leadership and yet many executives fail to understand the basic principles of problem solving. For the benefit of those who may have forgotten, the normal problem-solving sequence follows a four step procedure:

1. Identify the problem  
    Treat the cause, not the symptom
2. Postulate solutions  
    Consider all possible courses of action
3. Project the solution  
    Analyze and compare the pos-

sible consequences of each course of action

#### 4. Make the decision

Select the solution from the alternatives and translate the course of action selected into a concise statement of what is to be done.

### COMMUNICATE

A fundamental principle of leadership which every executive should know is: *Keep one's group informed.* The better an individual is informed, the better he can go about his task making full use of his initiative. The leader who fails to make essential information available to his subordinates will soon find that they are performing blindly without purpose. It is only natural that some information be kept confidential, but certainly most information is not of that sort.

Voltaire once stated, in writing to a friend, that if only he had more time he would have written a shorter letter. There is a lot of truth in his comment. It takes skill and time to

compose in a laconic style. However, no communication is worthwhile unless it accomplishes its purpose and no action will take place unless the communication is understood. This principle was stressed by John Ruskin when he said: “Say all you have to say in the fewest possible words, or your reader will be sure to skip them; and in the plainest possible words or he will certainly misunderstand them.”

Clear, concise directions are only part of the leader's responsibility. The individual who issues a communication and then takes no further action, assuming that his directions will be carried out without error, fails as a leader. Supervision to insure that one's directions are properly executed is a greater responsibility and is considerably more difficult to accomplish.

The able leader will use his subordinates to assist him in supervision. If he does not do so, he demonstrates a weakness in his ability to lead. Logic tells us that if a man can deliver only his own work, then he is worth only one salary.

## NAVA RELEASES NATIONAL SPEAKERS' DIRECTORY

A national directory of qualified speakers on various aspects of audio-visuals has been announced by the National Audio-Visual Association, Inc., Fairfax, Virginia. Persons listed are available as speakers to business groups, civic organizations, and educational, religious or similar type audiences on general subjects dealing with the modern communications technology.

According to Robert P. Abrams, chairman of the Association's Industry and Business Council, “The directory represents a solid effort to provide a source of information to interested groups in the great and steadily-growing field of audio-visuals and should give us in the industry new insights to the needs and

interests of audio-visual users, as well.”

Included in the directory is a special section listing those equipped to present “The Knowledge Industry,” a slide and motion picture presentation calling for greater use of audio-visual technology in order to achieve higher quality in education.

The NAVA Speakers' Directory has been prepared as a service to national and local organizations seeking speakers by the Industry and Business Council of the Association. Copies may be obtained free of charge by writing to the National Audio-Visual Association, Inc., 3150 Spring Street, Fairfax, Virginia 22030.