

Achieving a Growth Mindset – a Hallmark of Leadership

In recent articles, we have looked at the importance of setting goals, reflected on what prevents people from doing so and looked at strategies to increase our chances of attaining our goals.

A fundamental aspect of achieving success in any area of life is taking action. A goal without action is just a dream. Yet just as one of the reasons we don't set goals is fear of reaction from family, peers, colleagues or friends, the same reason applies to our failure to take action. Maybe we tried something different before and we were put down by people close to us. Maybe we are postponing taking action today because we are afraid of what people will say. Leaders have to get beyond worrying about criticism and past needing constant reassurance.

It is true that for every action there is a reaction. There will always be those that would seek to pull you back down to their level because they are afraid of you getting ahead. We are all aware of the tall poppy syndrome and many of us were counselled at home and in school to 'not get above our station' or 'not to blow our own trumpet'.

That is all outdated, small-minded thinking. The world needs leaders. Your agency needs leaders. The only people who will try to pull you down are those below you. It's the 'crabs in the bucket' analogy – the top crab never gets out of the bucket because the others pull it back down – and all the crabs perish. No wonder we say in Ireland that the naysayers are 'crabbed'!

Those true leaders above you will help you up because they recognise the need for more leaders. A leader's role is to see the good in people, to adopt a strength builder approach and to elevate and empower their colleagues and their staff. Leaders not only believe in the potential for people to change and to grow, but they create a culture where change and growth is expected. They are not threatened by others' success – they feel empowered by the success of those they coach and mentor. In turn, they look for mentors who are better than themselves; they surround themselves with people who think creatively, who are willing to take risks and who are growing and developing. Howard Gardner in his book 'Extraordinary Minds' concluded that exceptional individuals have a special talent for identifying their own strengths and weaknesses and those of others. Leaders with a growth mind set, display that same talent.

So, no more excuses. Drive forward for what you believe in – and go enthusiastically for your goals. Anticipate opposition – understand it and put it in perspective. Jim Rohn says – 'all good must be defended'. That goes for our values and our intent. Recognise negative comments for what they are – someone else's perception.

So as a leader, apply some basic principles:-

- Believe in yourself and your ability to continually learn and grow
- Look for the good and potential in others
- Inspire and empower staff to develop a growth mindset
- Identify a peer group, worthy of your respect
- Support each other to grow and develop, accepting feedback and integrating new learning
- Accept that when we try different approaches, things will go wrong. Do not make failing personal
- Work towards the Kaiser principle of continuous and never-ending improvement: correct don't protect.

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