LEADERSHIP

WHAT ARE LEADERS LIKE? BY KENNETH A. "BUZZ" SHAW

LEADERSHIP SOUP

One of Tolstoy’s characters reminds us that all happy families resemble each other while each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. The same goes for leadership; we learn more from successful leaders than from those who have failed. While there are a dozen or so characteristics of effective leaders, I will focus on four which should be on the top of anyone’s list.

Emotional Intelligence. Daniel Goleman, author of “Emotional Intelligence and Primal Leadership,” reminds us that among highly ranked leaders, the higher the level of responsibility, the more important emotional intelligence becomes. Goleman believes that the qualities of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill are important attributes of the emotionally intelligent leader with self-awareness the most important. Without self-awareness how do we recognize our strengths, weaknesses, interests and personal needs? And how can we build the best team, if we don’t really know ourselves?

Willingness to Continue Learning. Leaders can’t afford to stop learning about the social trends that will affect their organization, new technologies and local, national and international issues that affect the organizations direction and methods of operation. They must be eager and willing to develop such leadership skills as communications, motivating others, conflict resolution and group participation, a topic for next time. Leaders never stop growing, and others see this trait and model themselves accordingly.

Integrity. Robert House, who came up with the Path-Goal Theory of Leadership, studied leadership in 62 countries. He found certain characteristics to be common whether one lived in Hong Kong, Copenhagen, the United States or any of the other places studied. At the top of the list was integrity. People want to trust their leaders. People want to believe that they will be treated fairly and that their leaders work for the good of the organization. Part of that trust is in the belief that their leaders will show commitment to the cause through their actions. Trusted leaders walk the talk. Those who aren’t trusted, make teamwork impossible. Colleagues won’t give their all when their leaders’ motives are in question. Funny thing about trust — it is difficult to gain and quite easy to lose.

Ability to Develop Leadership Capacity in Others. A successful organization depends on many leaders getting stronger each year. Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, authors of “The Leadership Challenge,” describe this as “the paradox of power” — where leaders become more powerful as they give their power away. Help your people grow, and your organization will grow. And maybe you won’t have to work as hard. As is true of any short list, much has been left out. Obviously a prospective leader doesn’t get to first base lacking a decent level of intelligence, demonstrated strong performance and the eagerness to assume greater levels of responsibility. And, of course, there are the many skills that this dedicated, self-aware, trustworthy, and eager to learn person must have. Next time we will look at some of these skills and how the effective leader can develop them.

Kenneth A. “Buzz” Shaw is chancellor emeritus of Syracuse University and is the author of “The Intentional Leader” (Syracuse University Press). Shaw frequently lectures on the topic of leadership.

Kenneth A. “Buzz” Shaw also makes his expertise available to the public through his Web site, http://whitman.syr.edu/shaw/, which includes videos, articles, podcasts, speeches and presentations for leaders and business professionals.