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EXCELLENCE
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TRANSFORMATION ACROSS INDIANA

A message from CELL's Executive Director

Dear Colleagues,

I will soon take an extended leave of absence from my work with the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis in order to undergo a bone marrow transplant as a result of advancing leukemia. From what I understand, this procedure can be an uphill battle even in the best of circumstances and from a less optimistic viewpoint, much can go very wrong.

This situation creates an unprecedented amount of uncertainty for my future but it also brings into focus that it has been my good fortune to have lived a great life. Although it is my hope to return to work after recovering from the transplant procedure, my very survival has become my top priority, and I am coming to grips with the possibility that my 30-year career in education leadership may be coming to an end.

That realization has created in me an irresistible urge to share what I have learned through my years of leading many talented and capable professional educators. My

CELL Announces Acting Executive Director

Janet Boyle has been selected to be the acting executive director of CELL. David Dresslar, who has served as CELL's executive director since 2008, is taking an extended medical leave of absence beginning on November 3, 2014 to undergo a bone marrow transplant.

In response to this leadership change, Dresslar stated, "Janet is a highly qualified and capable individual who is well known for her educational leadership skills. The transition for CELL will be seamless and our mission will continue unabated under her direction."

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learning included much trial and plenty of error but resulted in developing [ten fairly simple leadership principles](#) that I have come to hold dear. I have described these principles below in the hope that you may find them useful and perhaps share them with others whom you feel might benefit.

1. Lead by valuing people

This principle may seem obvious upon first reflection but it has been my observation that leaders are often more concerned with organizational accomplishments than they are with the success of individuals who are responsible for those outcomes. It is clear to me that a good leader is someone who always develops positive relationships and values the people with whom they work. If you think of effective leaders, whether they are sculpted on the ramparts of Mt. Rushmore or sitting in the corner office down the hall, it is the value and respect that they place in people that first comes to mind.

2. Lead by providing security

Effective leadership is important in both good times and bad but it is most appreciated in difficult circumstances. When problems arise, leaders who are either prone to overreact or those who will not take ownership of the situation are destined to fail. Instead, when faced with difficult challenges, effective leaders remain calm, composed and unruffled while accepting the responsibility to address the situation. Such leadership behavior provides a heightened sense of security for followers throughout the organization and will be rewarded with greater levels of respect and loyalty.

3. Lead by giving the benefit of the doubt

Good leaders always try to give the benefit of the doubt when a follower's actions come into question. In these circumstances, effective leaders take the time to learn the facts and assume that the follower's actions merit a reasonable explanation before passing judgment. If a leader makes an accusation against a follower that turns

out to be inaccurate or unwarranted, no apology, no matter how sincere, will regain the loss of trust that is often created.

4. Lead by being forgiving

When a good leader determines that the actions of a follower are indeed wrong, he or she will address the problem directly and be constructive in finding a solution that often includes the active involvement of the follower. “How might you have done that better?” is a common question from an effective leader. Good leaders also know that accepting an apology and providing forgiveness is not a sign of weakness but rather, is evidence of real strength.

5. Lead by giving away the credit

When recognized for an accomplishment, people naturally express appreciation by thanking the person delivering the accolade. However, a good leader should temper his or her response to a compliment by first thinking of who else might best be associated with the recognition and benefit from the positive reinforcement it may represent. An effective leader who gives away the credit, or at least shares it with others, is appreciated by followers and does not diminish the recognition but, rather, makes it that much more meaningful.

6. Lead by taking the blame

When confronted with a complaint about someone for whom they are responsible, a good leader will initially accept the blame for themselves rather than allow the criticism to be attributed to a follower. Only after the leader has had the opportunity to investigate the situation with the follower, will an effective leader determine responsibility and then decide upon the appropriate response. Even in a circumstance where the leader has no involvement whatsoever, initially accepting the blame for themselves is an act of loyalty that will enhance the relationships between the leader and those whom they lead.

7. Lead by being decisive

All leaders are expected to make good decisions but effective leadership is much more than just that. Given the number of decisions usually facing a leader, most decisions should be made relatively quickly while others should be made only after careful consideration. An effective leader is someone who knows the difference. Although quick decisions will inevitably lead to some poor ones, 90 good decisions and 10 poor decisions are better than 10 good decisions and 90 decisions not made. Some decisions, however, require reflection, the gathering of information and the involvement of others. Effective leaders are decisive even though they maintain an understanding of the importance of deliberation in certain circumstances.

8. Lead by delegating

Good leaders never micromanage by insisting on being involved in every action or decision within the organization. Instead, effective leaders embrace the practice of delegating important decisions to followers on a regular and continuing basis. Delegating authority for meaningful work to those whom they lead is one of the most empowering actions a leader can take. Effective leaders realize that delegating decisions to their followers does not weaken their authority but understand that the more power they share, the more it is multiplied.

9. Lead through integrity

Leaders often face challenging situations for which the level, degree or tone of a reaction must be carefully considered. When an organization is under duress, it is only human for the leader to react defensively, but such responses often result in regret and embarrassment. An effective leader responds to threats by seeking clarification, determining a reasonable explanation and appealing to his or her best instincts. By acting with such integrity, the leader always enhances their professional reputation and standing.

10. Lead through honesty

Even good leaders have their flaws! However, leaders often hesitate to admit even their most obvious weaknesses or mistakes and in so doing, create a reputation for being less than forthright. As in most relationships, the level of honesty afforded by a leader has a positive effect on the level of honesty returned to that individual by his or her followers. Effective leaders are not afraid to admit that they got something wrong, were unfair in an appraisal or had what turned out to be a bad idea. Such honesty will be rewarded with greater respect for the leader and will also encourage a culture of greater honesty within the organization.

All ten of these leadership principles are based on respectful and productive relationships between the leader and his or her followers. There are, no doubt, many other factors beyond relationships that contribute to the success of an effective leader. For me, however, the way in which a leader interacts with those for whom they are responsible is by far the most important factor in any leader's success. It is my sincere hope that one or more of these leadership principles will resonate with you and, in turn, allow you to enhance your skills in effectively leading others.

Best wishes always,
David Dresslar

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