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# BUSINESS FIRST

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## Success in the Workplace

# Lessons in leadership revolve around set of core values

Business First of Louisville - August 31, 2007 by [Ronnie Frazier](#)

Most great leaders were not born with natural leadership abilities, so the logical conclusion is that it is developed over time.

To develop as a leader, one must build on the skills and experiences acquired, applying mentoring and coaching opportunities to continue building a successful foundation. To retain this talent, companies develop strategic succession planning initiatives to ensure the survival of the organization and its values.

Mentoring and coaching have played a key role in my career development. The ability to observe, work with and exchange ideas with executive management has given me experience and insights that cannot be learned in any book, seminar, or professional-development course.

I am not discounting any other method for developing leadership capabilities. My organization has allowed me to participate in many professional-development programs.

But what I have learned comes down to a set of core values that must be the foundation of leadership ability.

Know what you believe

The heart of leadership is what the leader believes, whether it's religious, political, or even social in nature.

An example of this can be demonstrated by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who said in a 1963 speech: "If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live."

King demonstrated what he believed by how he lived his life. For me, my Christian walk plays the center role for all decisions that I make, professionally and personally.

Live your character in public and private

Turn on the television, visit the Web or scan a magazine, and you can quickly observe professionals caught acting in a way that isn't consistent with their professional lives.

It's just a fact; you will be watched on and off the court. There are no timeouts.

I have been surprised to see individuals acting in way that is totally opposite of how I observed them professionally. And that impression is always the first thing that comes to mind when I think of that person.

Accept responsibility

Accepting responsibility might seem to be a concept that should be ingrained in our nature, but it's not. The blame game always will have a negative impact when you don't accept responsibility.

As an example, I once worked with plant operations staff to dispose of outdated product. I gave the

plant personnel orders to dispose of the product, but, to my error, the instructions were not as specific as they should have been.

The wrong product was disposed, costing the company about \$15,000. I had two choices: blame the plant personnel for disposing the wrong item or take ownership that my instructions were not clear enough.

By accepting responsibility for my mistake, I avoided damaging future relations with plant operations staff.

If you fall, get up

When asked about the number of failures while developing the light bulb, Thomas Edison replied "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that don't work."

What defines a leader is the ability to get back up and try again, despite all obstacles. Success is not what I accomplish but that I persevered to finish what I started.

Know your weaknesses

You must come to realize that it's not humanly possible to possess every skill necessary to complete every assignment. Each of us will have different talents or skills. We are experts at some, but others we are only novice at best.

The key is to build your team to fill the gaps. Your team should have the necessary skills for every assignment.

Help others

As a leader, your job is not to be the only keeper of knowledge; it is to empower people to do their job and to prepare them for future endeavors.

Knowing their objectives and helping them achieve them can boost not only morale, but the effectiveness within the organization by helping them succeed.

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