

## **Proactive Leadership**

The selection of the leadership of an organization is usually driven by the personality of the candidates and the promises of change, improvements and programmes they promise to implement during the period of office. There is nothing absolutely wrong with this, as it is all about how the candidates present themselves and their case. It is expected that the leadership will demonstrate its potential in being visionary and proactive. In these times of crisis, global leaders are required to be proactive, as it is expected that they will make things happen instead of waiting for them to happen.

This is a lesson that should not be missed by leaders of national organizations, whether they are heads of a political party, trade union, business community, church, non-governmental and sports organizations. They ought to understand the awesome responsibility entrusted upon them to engage in getting things done. Those who are revolutionary minded, are cautious about how they go about getting things done, as traditions are not always easy to change. The draw backs and resistance to the implementation of change, is inevitable, but this is where proactive leaders demonstrate an understanding of the issues and what is required to treat to them. In so doing, they can demonstrate that they have qualities and capacity to deliver what is expected as effective leader.

Being change oriented is a signature feature of a proactive leader. Such leaders tend to be visionary and hence recognize the need to plan in order to effectively execute. In taking responsibility for their management role, they also have to accept that they cannot realize their intentions and successfully achieve their goals without engaging and cooperating with the members of their team and others. However, it is for the leader to understand the importance of leading by example, and the need to be always looking for ways to improve.

Setting the tone for the organization is a responsibility which rests with the leader. Part of this is to advance a preference for proactive over reactive leadership. Far too many leaders may be guilty of playing a wait and see game, and when they decide to act, the impact is negligible. This could evoke a response that they have missed the boat. Such leaders may even be described as indecisive.

Far too often leaders are guilty of promising to deliver and failing to do so. The delay can sometimes be placed on the time it takes to complete the consultative process. This is one of the many lame excuses that is used when there is no serious intention to implement. On the other side of the coin, leaders can be accused of their inordinate haste to implement. This can be one of those disturbing moves that can only result in a push back, unwarranted tensions, loss of faith, trust and confidence in the leadership.

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The ability of the leader to motivate and inspire will also prove to be essential attributes. These will strengthen the character of the leader, where it is apparent that the individual has a values base, is resourceful and responsible. The character of the leader is further strengthened by their ability to demonstrate problem solving approaches, especially in dealing with difficult situations and within difficult times. The admiration for a proactive leader is how the individual functions in proactive management. This is how the leader deals with threatening problems before they emerge.

While many may aspire to be leaders, it should be known that charisma only will not make you a good and effective leader. Leadership is about having valuable qualities. If leaders are to have any significance attached to the role they play, then it makes good sense to be proactive rather than reactive. Proactive leaders are therefore expected to live by their own values. You must first have principles and standards which guide and inform your personal actions and behaviour, if you are to successfully influence those whom you lead. The actions of the proactive leaders should be guided by having an understanding of the bigger picture. Operation on assumptions, biases and a plan for a quick fix are not to be recommended. This requires that there is long term thinking. The conclusion is that a strong vision and plan for the long-term will help to guide the direction of short term projects and undertakings. This suggests that good organizational skills are necessary in order to keep on top of both short, long-term goals and daily needs.

Being a proactive leader means more than being able to inspire others. It goes further and ensures that there is accountability. Good communication should always rank high on the agenda of the leader, as it is the tool to achieve effective leadership. It is the medium to share information, gather opinions, feedback and ideas. It is expected that proactive leaders as progressive leaders would effectively communicate, in order to be less subjected to pressures, ridicule and criticisms. Being proactive can be considered as a good leadership trait, but where there is a sense of arrogance displayed on the part of the leader, this can never be seen as sensible. Effective leaders should never try to force their initiatives on others. They should always seek advice and help from colleagues and others.

Any support for proactive leadership should follow on the advice drawn from research findings which read: "The one thing you should take away is that proactivity is not about being fast and always keep moving. It is not about urgency. It is about a mindset that keeps you firmly grounded in difficult times. It is about having strong values. It is about having ability to anticipate the future. Ultimately, it is about choosing how to respond to the world on your own terms."

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