

## The Need to Breed Leaders

Leadership is a much talked topic in both private as well as public circles. According to R. M. Stogdill, a behavioral researcher, leadership is the most vastly researched and the least understood phenomenon on earth. You may find the number of books on leadership in a management bookshelf easily outnumbering the rest. The point here is the vitality of leadership for organizational success. With it comes the need to breed leaders.

Owing to the vastness of the whole subject area, let me define my scope. I would focus on leaders in general on a global scale, and business leaders in specific in the local scene. Leaders can be made. That's the promise of leadership development.

Leaders may be evident at any level of an organization, not only at the top but at the tap as well. In essence, leadership is the ability to influence people toward the attainment of organizational goals. Leadership is reciprocal, occurring among people. It is a "people" activity, distinct from administrative paper shuffling or mere problem-solving activities. Leadership is dynamic and involves driving change for the better.

Many CEOs lament about the lack of leaders among their ranks. It is needless to emphasize that leadership is an essential characteristic for any organization to prosper in an increasingly competitive business environment. How can we build leaders? It involves a multi-pronged approach in building a pipeline of breeding leaders. First comes the attitude, followed by aptitude. It involves leading oneself and then leading others. Having a set of values that governs one's behavior towards timely and accurate decision making is step one. Influencing, inspiring and instructing others are all that come as step two.

Every issue of Management Digest contains insightful articles on leadership. This time it is about charismatic leaders. It is heartening to see the assessment of charismatic leaders in the Sri Lankan context. The challenge, as we already saw, is to breed leaders who can move their organizations from good to great. In essence, exploration and application of leadership are both enriching experiences. Sri Lankan organizations can do more in both fronts, in making their key people "thinking performers". There is a golden maxim that echoes in my mind. Those who serve deserve leadership.

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