
The Top Five Leadership Skills Found In Effective Managers

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Introduction

You may know this already, but I was a police officer for a shade over 35 years.

It was in my first eight years of my career at the London Metropolitan Police in England that I met a leader, who for me, epitomized everything that brilliant leaders should.

At just 19 years old perhaps I didn't know any better.

Yet, as I experienced different supervisors, managers, and leaders throughout my career, it became increasingly clear to me that I had the enormous good fortune of having Inspector John Burbeck (or "Sir," as I referred to him) as my first, and quite simply, one of the best leaders that I have ever had the privilege to work for.

So, what made John Burbeck such a powerful influence in my life? What were those leadership skills that set him apart from everyone else?

Well, let's take the next few minutes to explore those questions.

There are several essential qualities that every leader must have and demonstrate in order to be as effective and impactful as John Burbeck was to me and my colleagues.

You could easily fill a book discussing these properties (which is my project for 2019), but for the purpose of this blog, I have decided to focus on just five effective leadership skills.

Leadership, as far as I'm concerned, is more about the ability of a person to "influence" others than it is about their rank. Having a position in which they are responsible for supervising, mentoring, and coaching others is definitely an advantage, but not critical to the essential elements of the five attributes I have chosen to discuss.

As you read these, think back to your version of John Burbeck.

And, if you are in a supervisory, managerial, or leadership role in your organization, how do you think you stack up against the following competencies?

1. Motivating And Inspiring Others

This effective leadership skill focuses on the ability to get you excited about your work and why you are doing it.

When the person we report to shows up and is clearly enthusiastic and energetic about the work to be done, it tends to result in the unlocking of a secret box in which we keep what is known as “discretionary energy.”

We all have discretionary energy and, as the name suggests, it’s something that we can choose whom to give it to. Logically, we tend to give this extra energy to those individuals who draw out our natural desire to be a bigger version of ourselves.

Leaders with this ability often demonstrate a high level of comfort and self-confidence, but without it ever seeming arrogant

Don’t worry, to motivate others you don’t need to be a motivational speaker because, as we know, actions speak far louder than words. People receive the best commitment from their teams by setting the example for them. When the team sees that energy and enthusiasm from their leader, they will be inspired to follow suit.

John Maxwell is quoted with this version of an ancient proverb: “He who thinks he leads, but has no followers, is only taking a walk.”

2. Developing And Supporting Others

This type of skill zeros in on the ability of a manager to develop and support individuals on their team.

One of the things that really draws us towards certain types of leaders is when they show an interest in who we are, why we’re there in the first place, and what we want to achieve in our professional careers (and sometimes even in our lives outside of the workplace).

When leaders work with employees and encourage (perhaps even push) them to develop new skills and competencies, they build higher levels of satisfaction and commitment.

The best versions of people are often found outside of their safe zones, and sometimes people need a mentor or coach to move them out of that comfortable place to somewhere they can experience growth. This helps build a culture of continuous learning—a place where growing becomes the norm, not the exception.

People with these types of leadership skills get excited by the success of others.

I remember that John Burbeck regularly held a debrief at the end of the day. It became something that I looked forward to.

At those debriefings we sat down as a team and discussed the things that went right that day (and why they went right), as well as examining the things that didn't go so well (and why they didn't).

Even though we policed on our own during the dayshifts (nightshifts we were in pairs), these conversations were about the performance of our group as a whole, resulting in no one wanting to let down other members of the team.

We were essentially holding each other accountable and providing support so that everyone could succeed. I remember coming away from those quick debrief sessions excited about the work that I was doing.

3. Developing Trust

I remember David Horsager, a fellow professional speaker, starting one of his presentations with these words: "Everything of value is built on trust."

I feel that one of the most important leadership skills involves building trust.

Leaders can create trust by becoming aware of the concerns, aspirations, and circumstances of the people on their team. Trust is earned by leaders when they are clear in their communication, compassionate towards their team members, and consistent with their words and behaviours.

Trust is also given to those leaders who demonstrate that they are competent—but not only do they show that they are knowledgeable, they freely share that knowledge and expertise as well.

We also tend to trust people who project confidence in their ability to make informed decisions. But we must also trust that if these leaders don't know an answer, they can acknowledge that fact. I remember many times asking John Burbeck a question and receiving the response, "Great question, Phil. Let me look into it and get back to you." And he always did.

Trust is built on rock-solid honesty and integrity.

There have been many studies showing the fantastic benefits of high-trust relationships in organizations. There is less stress, more energy, higher productivity, fewer sick days taken, and much more engagement and satisfaction. Who wouldn't want that?

I think we can all agree that effective leadership skills definitely start with trust.

4. Building Relationships

Building relationships is another critical leadership and management skill.

Effective leaders who stay in touch with issues and concerns of individuals in the group, tend to have employees with higher levels of satisfaction and commitment.

I recently spent some time with a past colleague of mine in England and we began chatting about our memorable leaders. Ian shared two stories about meeting two different Metropolitan Police Commissioners (The Commissioner is the senior most officer of the London police force—a job that is considered to be the very top policing job in the country). One Commissioner wouldn't even look at Ian as they rode up in an elevator together. The other one had a reputation of wandering through the building and randomly sitting down at work stations and chatting with staff members about their work. You can imagine which one Ian wanted to give his discretionary energy to!

I noticed this with John Burbeck as well. I found that we often sat down in the police station cafeteria together, one on one. And it wasn't just me that he worked to build a relationship with. It was every single person on our team at the time. Most importantly, it was never done in any way that elevated anyone above anyone else on the team.

This personal time has been quantified by various studies examining the benefit of certain types of leadership skills and traits. The more one-on-one time that leaders spend with their team members, the greater the benefits.

5. Being Strategic And Having A Map

Another type of management skill to possess and demonstrate is that of vision.

Effective leaders always know where they are going and are able to continually communicate that destination to their team. Furthermore, they are able to be flexible when a course adjustment is necessary. We all know what happened to the Titanic when the White Star Line did not listen to the advice given about where icebergs lay in the Atlantic...

When employees are provided with a positive sense of direction, they tend to be more satisfied and committed. The effective leader will paint a clear picture of the destination and how the day-to-day activities apply to it. After all, employees need to know that their efforts

and hard work make a difference in the grand scheme of things. An effective manager understands that they can't achieve success on their own— every member of the team is vital.

I hope these five skills struck a chord with you. Perhaps inspiring you as a manager, or helping you realize what to look for in a future employer.

Leaders with these types of skills make a massive difference in the experience of employees.

And I can't stress enough that leadership is about influence, not rank or title.

Thank you, John Burbeck, for helping me realize this.

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