

## **4. Developing Relationships**

### **a. Connecting with (the right) people**

One of the major tasks of a leader is to make things happen. The more influential you become the greater your chances of success will be. Before you can make anything happen, you have to influence somebody. Before you can influence anybody, you have to connect with somebody. If you adopt the attitude that your followers must come to you instead of you going to them, you will lose numerous opportunities to help others.

Many people who appear self-confident and out-going might see you as too busy or too important to be concerned about their problems. You have to initiate the contact with those people. You have to let them feel that you are their best friend. You have to create a relaxed atmosphere so that those people will open up their hearts to you. You have to get into the hearts of those people before you even think of influencing or motivating them. These rules apply whether you are connecting with one individual or with an audience of 6,000 people. Remember, you are there to help them achieve their goals: whether those goals are the goals of the individual or the group.

Not only do you have to connect with your followers and your peers, you also have to be able to connect with people who can help you achieve your goals and the goals of your people. This is when all the qualities of a true leader come into focus. Why? Because you need to get the attention and cooperation of that person whose help you are seeking. You need to interest them in what you are trying to achieve for your people and convince them to give you their support.

This “right person” might be a total stranger to you, or you may have to speak with her for the first time on the telephone. It may be someone who is very influential in your community. Regardless of who it may be, you need to find a way to get to the heart of that person in order to secure their assistance in the matter. One thing you can do is find out some things about that person. What her passions are, what motivates her, what you can do or say that will make her feel good about helping you? Then highlight those areas in your initial conversation with that person.

**b. Do it first**

Nothing turns people off more than a “leader” who sits back and tells them what to do, when to do it, and how to do it! True leaders lead by example. They do it first and then show others how to get the job done. I was at a church service where the Pastor, instead of preaching a sermon on tithes and offerings said; “I received a check for \$5,000.00 yesterday. It was for some work I did long ago and they just decided to pay me. Here is my check to the church for \$500.00.”

Do not fall into the misguided concept of being a leader who orders people what to do. There are enough of those persons around. Their predecessors have all disappeared from the scene, most times without a tear being shed for them. You are here to influence, motivate, and encourage others to bring out their best qualities and achieve their highest expectations.

A true leader gains inspiration from her followers. When a leader knows that she is loved and respected by the people she leads, she will do almost anything to enhance that relationship.

**c. People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care**

Two of the most influential women in modern times were Mother Teresa and Princess Diana. These women were also known as the world's two most caring people. (London Daily Mail, 1996).

If a leader does not care about her followers, she ceases to be their leader. She may still be the person who holds the position of the leader, but by definition she is no longer leading those people.

Most everyone who has done basic reading about leadership is familiar with the cliché above. It is probably the foundation on which many books on leadership are written.

It is one thing to really care about people, but it is equally important for a leader to let her followers know that she cares about them. I was once a member of a large church, and the Pastor there made it his “business” to know the names of every member, the names of their non-member spouses and children, and any other relative he met.

This was his “business,” to connect with the church members. I believe he must have put aside time on a regular basis to revise all those names. Not only did he know the first and last names, he knew the schools each child attended, the names of most of the employers, and he always asked (in private) about the status of any personal matters the members had discussed with him.

Do not be deceived. People know exactly how much you do or do not care about them.

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