



Cultivating leadership and innovation in the workplace

A leader's focus is to create a better future. A leader is an innovator—one who attempts to bring about change, who builds something new...a better product or service—something to enhance our lives. There are many dreamers who have great ideas but never bring them to action. A leader/innovator has both a vision of their desired achievement and the ability to implement a plan to ensure the success of realizing their dream. A leader is a can-do person who is able to create a systematic approach that includes surrounding themselves with quality people. The word "no" is not in the visionary leader's vocabulary. They accept all challenges put before them, manifesting a game-plan to achieve their desired goals. The leader must possess the drive to move forward no matter what insurmountable odds they may face. The innovator is charismatic and creative—thinking outside the conventional box. The visionary sees the big picture, and the leader in them is able to create a possibility where none exists, to bring their dream through the difficult times. As the followers see the success of each aspect of their leader's dream, they are motivated and pursue greater challenges with a new sense of perseverance and clarity of purpose. Employees must see results and participate in the challenge to implement the change.

In order for a company to achieve their potential and tap the market strategies for the discretionary dollar in this new economy, they need innovation and impeccable leadership. Companies must seek out better ways to ensure their market share, by reaching out to their employees, peer groups, customers, and executives. It is critical to go beyond the norm during this recessionary process. Companies must initiate a strategic management program that will allow communication from all facets of management and employees—leaving no stone unturned. A good leader recognizes the only way for a company to stimulate the innovation process is through their people. Many senior executives and companies we work with concern themselves with nothing but short-term performance and immediate cash flow. Their fear of both failure and success prevents them from sponsoring new ideas and innovation. A good leader will reward those who bring about innovative ideas to improve market share, cost savings, and profitability. There are times when these innovative ideas may mean that senior management needs to rethink their way of doing business. It is critical for the leader and

innovator to ensure that these new ideas are not stifled or hidden from their vision. It is crucial for companies to embrace these new ideas and visions, and to take the risks necessary to bring them to fruition.

I have interviewed many successful leaders. From the mom-and-pop businesses to presidents of Fortune 100 companies, all have similar traits: vision, creativity, innovative strategy, desire to win, people skills, courage, positive attitude, quality of execution, goal setting, resource planning, analysis skills, killer instincts, and compassion. There are those who have all of these skills and the ability to use them. Some have parts of the pie, and then surround themselves with others who have the skills they lack. Leaders who are innovators usually have the vision, creativity, but it is the innovative strategy that allows them to initiate their thought, dream, or desire for a new product or company. It is a gifted leader, who has the remaining of these skills, with the ability to surround themselves with quality people who can take them to the next level. No man is an island unto himself. Without a strong team to implement the innovator's thoughts and dreams, the company will die. It is one in a million that can take a dream and bring it to fruition.

Our nation is made up of entrepreneurs and executives who have embraced the American dream and produced the finest products, services, and companies in the world. It is the responsibility of the visionary leader to inspire their workers, management team, and investors to bring their dreams and vision into being. You have to be hungry and willing to take risks yet protect when called upon. You must hire people who want success as badly as you do and who are loyal, trusting, and passionate about their work. The great leaders are able to listen to all of the suggestions, decipher what is critical, and then reward the management team and workers who have been innovators themselves. The winners implement all these gifts to create a company that will be successful in the short-term and in the future. We must be able to take calculated risks and turn failures into successes. With hard work and passion, all dreams can come true.