

# THE IMPACT OF THE LEADER'S IMAGE ON BUSINESS EFFICIENCY

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**Abstract:**

*In a business world where concurrency is so hard, each element that could develop the efficiency of the activity is important. One of these elements is the image of the leader. How should a leader be to influence the image of the firm before the clients? How can a good leader increase the profit by managing in a right way the employees? This paper wish to present which of characteristics does a leader need to make things work efficiently.*

**Key words:** leader, image, characteristics, efficiency

**JEL classification:** M12, M31, M54

In our times, when the competition between firms are so hard and because of the financial crisis it's not easy to be efficient.

Maybe managers are thinking that only financial resources or material resources can help to stay stable on the market.

In the last years more and more specialists are talking about the importance of human resources in the development of businesses. In that way we can speak about how important is to have good employees: how to recruit, how to select or to form human resources, or how to help them to have a career. But employees could not function without leaders (formal or informal). As professor W. Burke said in his book "Organization change: Theory and practice" that it is very important to select good leaders that can be an engine for all the employees. Which are some of characteristics that make a leader to be such an "engine"?

We can make an ideal portrait of a leader. Some characteristics as a person who has a vision about what will be the future development of the firm, or a charismatic, full of integrity, with emotional intelligence, an inspiring delivery and sterling character are really necessary for a leader. These characteristics make the image of a leader. The image of the leader influences the activity of employees and that will conduct to have a more efficient business.

To be a good leader in the time of crisis is very hard. People think that a good leader has to do heroic things, as to find solutions when they have none, but real leaders are those who are able to manage situations each day, that have the power to coordinate people in limit situations. Sometimes employees are expecting from the leader to have all the answers to solve the problems. A good leader is those who is able to share his attributions and responsibilities with others. The employers are better involved in the activity if they are considered also leaders, in a smaller level. That way to solve problems increases the confidence of the workers in their own abilities but, also, the image of the leader before his subordinates.

By another way we can ask what is one of the most important tools a leader can have? Maybe it is important an extensive training, a handful of certificates, or an impressive resume? All these things pale in comparison to one tool no leader should be without, a positive mental attitude. That kind of attitude makes someone to behave as a leader and the influence that the leader have on others. Maybe each of us could make an

experience: if you are smiling to someone is it almost sure that the person will do the same thing. So, if a leader is positive factor of the team the employees will be the same and the productivity goes up. To be positive it supposes to seek good things about the others, to find the good part of each of them. If he will do this he will find more and more positive characteristics and he will be able to use these in the way to grow the efficiency. That's the power of being positive. Of course that staying positive is a challenge sometimes considering the economical and financial situations of the firms. To have a positive attitude a leader has to know that he needs to accept the things he cannot change, and the courage to change the things he can and to remember that "Every day may not be good, but there is something good in every day."

Next to a positive attitude the image of a good leader is bounded of some characteristics that define him. Let's enumerate the most important characteristics of a good leader:

- **the vision** – that means that he knows the way he wants to go and how to motivate people to believe in his decisions, his strategy. He views things as what he could be and not what he is;
- **to be wise** – that supposes to make critical calls at assorted points in their organization. Having the knowledge to make the correct call is crucial in making sure the organization is successful. Good leaders are strategic, wise and perceptive;
- **to be passionate** - that characteristic make the leader to be focused on the problem, to operate with high level responsibility, and help him to take action;
- **to have compassion** – that helps him to have great coaching and development skills. While these leaders have goals to accomplish, to care for the individuals. That means to have a heart for the people that follow them;
- **to be charismatic** – this characteristic makes a leader to draw people with his personality, he is excellent to build relationships and demanding performance from his peers;
- **to be a great communicator** – that means that he is a great orator and persuader, he feels comfortable with public speaking and he is inspiring people and also he can develop a good following with communication ability;
- **to be persistent** - that suppose to be determined to attaining his goals seeing the advantages of this even he knows that to attend goals it means to confront with a lot of problems;
- **to have integrity** – it is the guaranty of keeping his promises and that he really means what he says. This kind of leader is this one that people find him reliable and are dedicated to him;
- **to dare** – he is bold enough to chase after his dreams, he is courageous, he can control his fears;
- **to be disciplined** – he disciplined his mind to be focused and steady regardless of the situation; he is controlled in the pursuit of his goals;

Of course, leaders can not be strong in all these characteristics, but they have to know their skills and they have to make efforts to build on these characteristics of good leadership in themselves. To be an efficient leader is not about being perfect but to improve his abilities.

In the history of the humanity, as Jim Collins presents in his work "Good to Great", we can see some leaders that were followed and admired, but sure they don't fit out our ideal image:

1. The teenage gang leader who attracts a following because he has “street credit” is tough and prepared to defy the law, even if it means shooting his way out of trouble.

2. Stalin, currently admired by many Russians who seem to want their leaders to be decisive disciplinarians who rule with an iron fist even if they are ruthless, insensitive and prepared to eliminate all opposition. Many cultures seem to prefer decisive, iron-fisted, dictatorial leaders even if they are secretive and highly controlling.

3. Hitler, loathsome values, zero integrity and no ethics but had a loyal following.

4. Technical leaders, geeks whose new product ideas inspire their team members even though they have no vision, an abrasive style and little emotional intelligence.

5. Leaders in scientific or professional functions who exert quiet influence based on factual knowledge or evidence but who are personally uninspiring.

Our ideal leader image is thus biased in two ways: first it is culturally relative and second we narrowly focus on larger-than-life characters such as chief executives and heads of state, the heroic, glamorous end of the spectrum. Further, we make matters worse by defining leadership in heroic terms.

Leaders are people with a following, but not each man that has followers seem to be a leader in the right sense. We are speaking about efficient leaders.

Scientists made the remark that one of most frustrating challenges facing business leaders today is closing what is commonly known as the execution gap (or sometimes the strategy gap). The execution gap is a perceived gap between a company’s strategies and expectations and its ability to meet those goals and put ideas into action. After he made his study he concluded that 49% of business leaders perceived a gap between strategy and execution; 64% lacked confidence in their company’s ability to narrow it and there are some rules for closing the execution gap, rules that we wish to present in the next part of the paper:

**1. Clearly Define the Desired End Result** – one of the most important way to have efficiency is to define clearly the vision and the goals. If the leader is not able to define them clearly what they want accomplished can hardly expect others to understand their strategy and participate in their projects with any level of meaningful contribution. Fuzzy definitions will produce fuzzy results, if any at all. Without this clarity, the employees will try to guess what the leaders really want instead of accomplishing it.

**2. Concisely Articulate the “Why”** – the leader have to explain why he wants to act in a specify manner. He must be able to *effectively* communicate to them his aims and the motivations to do something. The communication must be clear and concise because employees are more likely to disappoint if they don’t understand what leaders expect.

It was experienced that if employees does understand what are the strategic decisions they are more involved in their activities and more loyal to their work. Without this understanding it is easy for them to feel isolated instead of feeling like actively engaged participants in a meaningful enterprise.

**3. Acknowledge Ignorance and Acquire Necessary Knowledge** – Ignorance is one of the most serious causes not to have an efficient activity. To accept a project without having the necessary knowledge can ruin a business. To make sure strategies get put into motion, you must make sure you have the knowledge and skills to manage the project. Leaders, with adequate self-awareness, can honestly assess if they have the necessary working knowledge for their roles. They have the possibility to be trained to get knowledge that is necessary to do their project.

**4. Assemble a Quality Leadership Team** - a leader should be the person who is able to initiate and determine people to collaborate, to be a team in developing strategies and to work together. Typically this process begins with an idea from the initiator as its starting point regardless of how it might develop from there.

A leader should aim to build a highly qualified team that can honestly pick apart his strategies from all angles. He has to allow his team to poke holes in his ideas as he debate and deliberate together with the member of the team. Finding weak spots prior to implementation will help close the execution gap.

**5. Closely Monitor Progress** – after project starts the leader has to monitor progress of the activity, the task assignments programs. The executive leadership team should ensure project leaders are acutely aware that this practice is not acceptable. Those under their purview should be expected to perform and be held accountable for the results. This monitoring should not suffocate the workers because people need to be given a certain latitude in the order to be productive. Wise leaders are able to find the fine balance of exercising reasonable accountability while still allowing enough breathing room for employees to do their best work.

**6. Listen Intently to Feedback** – because leaders are not omniscient they are not able to know everything in advance. That's why leaders must listen to feedback from all of their employees (and also from customers, when appropriate). They cannot afford to be insular and surrounded by yes-men who refuse to tell you the naked truth about the problems as they occur. They have to listen to collaborators opinion.

**7. Be Flexible (Within Reason)** – between the implementation of the project they are a lot of unexpected situations. A good leader has to be flexible, to adapt to changes. This adaptation must often be made on the fly. The adjustments can be made to move the implementation process forward, even in the face of unexpected difficulties. But there should be a limit to how many adjustments are acceptable, since typically additional resources will be used for each one that becomes necessary.

**8. Celebrate Incremental Achievements Along the Way** – to motivate the team it is important to celebrate each smaller success, to appreciate positive actions. That practice that allows leaders to acknowledge and recognize the hard-won accomplishments their teams are making on a more regular basis. Pausing to celebrate along the way lets employees know their efforts are valued and are not going unnoticed.

**9. Share the Credit for Success With Everyone Involved** - leaders should be very cognizant of this fact and remember to always give credit where it is due. Failure to do so will cause their employees to resent them and undermine any camaraderie that has built up over the course of working together. Resentful employees will be less likely to execute your vision at a high level.

**10. Be Willing to Abandon a Strategy or Project** – a leader should be honest to recognize if a project isn't efficient. They should analysis continuously the objectives and the length they were accomplished. If the results are not satisfactory and they are no ways to resolve the weak points they have to be objectives and quit on a failing project.

Talking about leader we have to talk about **leadership** philosophy. Leaders on each level, executives, managers, staff, customers, suppliers, stakeholders, etc., need solid philosophical principles on which to base their expectations, decisions and actions.

For leadership to work well, people (employees and interested outsiders) must be able to connect their expectations, aims and activities to a basic purpose or philosophy of the organization. This foundational philosophy should provide vital reference points for employees' decisions and actions - an increasingly significant factor in modern 'empowered' organizations. Seeing a clear philosophy and purpose is also essential for staff, customers and outsiders in assessing crucial organizational characteristics such as integrity, ethics, fairness, quality and performance. A clear philosophy is vital to the 'psychological contract' - whether stated or unstated (almost

always unstated) - on which people (employees, customers or observers) tend to judge their relationships and transactions.

As a leader the responsibility extends beyond leading the people. True leadership also includes - as far as his situation allows - the responsibility to protect or refine fundamental purpose and philosophy.

Jack Welch, respected business leader and writer is quoted as proposing these fundamental leadership principles:

1. There is only one way - the straight way. It sets the tone of the organization.
2. Be open to the best of what everyone, everywhere, has to offer; transfer learning across your organization.
3. Get the right people in the right jobs - it is more important than developing a strategy.
4. An informal atmosphere is a competitive advantage.
5. Make sure everybody counts and everybody knows they count.
6. Legitimate self-confidence is a winner - the true test of self-confidence is the courage to be open.
7. Business has to be fun - celebrations energize and organization.
8. Never underestimate the other guy.
9. Understand where real value is added and put your best people there.
10. Know when to meddle and when to let go - this is pure instinct.

However - always he has to remember the philosophical platform - this ethical platform is not a technique or a process - it's the foundation on which all the techniques and methodologies are based.

An efficient leader has to take some actions as:

- **to plan carefully** with the people where appropriate, how they will achieve their aims. He may have to redefine or develop his own new aims and priorities. Leadership can be daunting for many people simply because no-one else is issuing the aims - leadership often means you have to create your own from a blank sheet of paper. He has to set and agree clear standards. He has to keep the right balance between 'doing' yourself and managing others 'to do';
- **to build teams** that means to ensure to look after people and that communications and relationships are good. He has to select good people and help them to develop. To develop people via training and experience. He needs to follow the rules about delegation closely - this process is crucial. It is vital to ensure that the managers are applying the same principles. Good leadership principles must cascade down through the whole organization;
- **to communicate** with the team is critical. Listen, consult, involve, explain why as well as what needs to be done;
- **to take time to listen to and really understand people**. Walk the job. Ask and learn about what people do and think, and how they think improvements can be made;
- **to accentuate the positive**. Express things in terms of what should be done, not what should not be done. If you accentuate the negative, people are more likely to veer towards it.
- **to have faith in people to do great things** - given space and air and time, everyone can achieve more than they hope for. Provide people with relevant interesting opportunities, with proper measures and rewards and they will more than repay your faith;
- **to take difficult decisions bravely**, and be truthful and sensitive when you implement them.

- **to seek to learn from the people around him** - they will teach you more about yourself than anything else;
- **to embrace change**, but not for change's sake. Begin to plan his own succession as soon as he takes up his new post, and in this regard, ensure that the only promises he ever make are those that he can guarantee to deliver.

If it's not clear already, leadership is without doubt mostly about behaviour, especially towards others. People who strive for these things generally come to be regarded and respected as a leader by their people. Great leadership quotes and inspirational quotes as:

"People ask the difference between a leader and a boss.... The leader works in the open, and the boss in covert. The leader leads and the boss drives." (Theodore Roosevelt)

"Management means helping people to get the best out of themselves, not organising things." (Lauren Appley)

"Behind an able man there are always other able men." (Chinese Proverb.)

Why are we talking so much about leaders and leadership? Because that could be the key of success in the period of crisis, efficiency is bounded to how does leaders act and manage activity. Good leaders promote a high leveled activity and stimulate employees to be efficient.

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