

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader." ~ John Quincy Adams

A Leadership Perspective

Wikipedia defines *leadership* as "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members." "Leadership does not involve changing the mindset of a group, but the cultivation of an environment that brings out the best or inspires the individuals in the group." This is a core belief of our work with teams.

As many of you know, we strongly believe that in order to exist for the long term in the financial services industry, you must be part of a team or in the process of forming one. Our full-time job at Paragon is to advise on partnerships, structure roles and responsibilities, deal with team dynamics, and maximize overall efficiency. Great teams must have a strong leadership foundation to succeed. To fulfill their leadership role, designated leaders must spend a majority of their efforts, time, and resources on activities that directly relate to the future development of the business. To enable our leaders to focus on their duties, the team members must spend a majority of their efforts, time, and resources on the day-to-day responsibilities of the business.

Developing this type of synergy between leaders and team members is a challenge for most investment advisory teams because of many factors. Advisors often resist the leadership role or prefer to stay in their comfort zone of doing what they know. Fear of failure and of the unknown usually controls many leaders, which in turns leads to resisting personal growth and avoiding change. Very little training is offered on how to be an effective leader and there are many schools of thought on the subject. Search "leadership" on Amazon and you will find close to 200,000 results, with a multitude of perspectives on the subject. Leaders are often challenged to define a compelling vision that others want to embrace because it is difficult to hone in on guiding principles for life and business. Without these defining statements, individuals often do not understand their purpose on a team nor do they have clear role definition. If team members are mismatched for their jobs, they will also lack the motivation to be led, which can lead to dissension and disengagement. The first step to motivating people is understanding people. You cannot understand people if you don't first understand self. Lastly, many people become complacent. If things are going ok, there's really no need to change. Leadership is only required if there is a burning desire inside to move forward. Leaders must truly believe there is something better out there than what they currently possess.

So what are leaders to do with all these forces working against them? In no way can a newsletter truly answer this question, but I do hope to provide some key elements to lead you down the right path.

- Take a deep breath and **own the position**. No more trying to pawn your responsibilities onto someone else or ignore the need for your vital position.
- **Realize you can't do it alone**. To be a leader you must have followers, so share your leadership conundrum with your team and seek their help. You can't possibly have all the answers so be open to others' input.
- Ask those closest to you to help you **define your vision**. Those who have close ties to you can often help you uncover a real vision that is personal to you. They can challenge you and often see things in you that others cannot. But remember, the vision needs to be one that is meaningful to you and where your personal passion can be vividly illustrated. When people feel your vision, they want to come along for the ride. This builds trust with your followers.

- **Embrace** a path of **self-awareness** and **personal development**. This goes for everyone on the team, not just the leaders. It's natural for people to want to grow and become more, but many people limit their potential. Our souls crave personal growth and it makes the universe a bigger and better place. Ask your team what they need to perform at the highest level, and seek training and resources that support that.
- **Determine your intended purpose**. This also goes for everyone on the team. Knowing what energizes versus drains individuals is vital to fully capitalizing on each person's talents in a team. As stated earlier, the leader of a team needs to focus most of his or her time on activities that drive the future of the business. This would mean that you need cracker-jack people with complementary strengths doing work that frees up the leader to fulfill the primary purpose. Of course you can't spend all your time looking to the future and your team members may have to take on a variety of responsibilities. Everyone on a team should strive to spend 70-80% of their time on the right activities for them - ones that they are gifted to do. This is why our focus is helping advisory teams build the proper people infrastructure. You must understand all the work that needs to be done in your unique business then put the right people in the right position to drive the work forward.
- **Create a positive organizational culture for your team**. Understanding what is expected and valued by your team keeps the players in the game. Ideally, you want your team to be motivated by similar interests to make this an effortless task. If you have common bond among everyone on your team, you will be naturally motivated.
- **Listen more, talk less**. As the leader you have power – either real or perceived – over those that you lead. Whether you like it or not, because of your position, your words carry weight. If you start sharing your ideas when you are trying to solicit input from others, they may be less likely to share their possible solutions. Why? They assume you already have a plan or an answer – after all, in the past you had been doing all the talking. Besides, if you let them share their ideas, chances are one of them will come up with the same thoughts you had, and if that idea comes from the group instead of you it will be much more powerful. Talk less and demonstrate your interest in others.

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If you have any comments or suggestions on how we can better assist you and your practice, please know that we welcome your input.

Warmest regards,

Krista

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