



To The Point - March 3, 2008

Dear Leader,

Every leader will face times when it seems that everything is falling apart.

Whether set off by external events or internal mistakes, a crisis can be a distressing time. The emotions of everyone on the team are thrown into turmoil as past hard work and the future are at once placed in jeopardy. Everyday work gets more difficult as people lose focus - thinking about the dire consequences the crisis could bring.

It is precisely at times like these that leaders emerge. A business leader from Montreal reminded me today, "When times are great, there are lots of leaders - every vision works! But when times are tough - that's when you see real leadership."

The leader has to be the one who remains cool under pressure. The one who behind closed doors is on bended knees asking God for wisdom, guidance and support. The leader has to be the one who consolidates people and resources, identifies alternatives, selects the best course of action and confidently works toward fulfilling the mission. The leader is the one who also tries to help each teammate deal with the emotions of the moment. The leader needs to show her or his people 'light at the end of the tunnel' with a confident plan that moves successfully beyond current circumstances.

To gain a reputation as an exceptional leader, you need to prepare well before the tough times hit. You should have a solid awareness of what to do and how to act during a crisis so you can perform brilliantly when the pressure is on. Here are some leadership tips for tough times:

1. ***Focus on your vision***
Economic malaise is temporary, as is economic vigor. It's your vision that's permanent, with its associated mission, values, and strategy. Ensure it is sound, and reiterate it to all your team.
2. ***Sharpen your core competencies***
Every ministry or organization has a unique and special calling that differentiates it from others. Sharpen yours.
3. ***Bring good people alongside***
During any economic downturn you truly find out who your friends are. Get together with them seeking counsel, wisdom and partnerships.

4. ***Redeploy***
When times are tough, redeploy the best people to lead initiatives suited to their gifts. Are there volunteers who can assist? What is a new way for you to deliver your services?
5. ***Guard your cash***
Use money prudently to maintain current operations; and invest it wisely for the future, including the future hiring of new employees.
6. ***Manage your knowledge***
Capture, process, disseminate, and leverage your unique knowledge. Strengthen your knowledge and relationship management systems or, if you don't have one, develop it.
7. ***Eliminate the valueless***
Now is the time to cull the activities that never lead to action, to reengineer your processes, and ruthlessly to eliminate anything wasteful.

While it never feels good - these negative downturns definitely are learning experiences that will strengthen you for the future. The intense heat and pressure of a crisis both refines and purifies you as a leader.

*"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now I have kept thy word."
Psalm 119:67 KJV*

That's it - to the point,

Carson

Carson Pue
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