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Impact of Self-Leadership on Success in the Business World



*50 per cent of employees throughout the world leave their jobs to get away from their bosses. Only 10-15 per cent of employees are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace. This statistic is alarming because the economic consequences of it represent trillions of dollars of lost productivity. The good news is that leaders and their organizations can address this problem with self-leadership training which will positively impact engagement, create a better work atmosphere, boost productivity, and ultimately result in a larger bottom line, writes stars alumna **Isabelle NUSSLI**, Chief Energizing Officer of [Leverage Yourself](#).*

Have you ever thought of improving the existing leadership of your company to boost its performance? If you think about the development needs of your leaders and the power of self-leadership, where self-leadership involves a greater awareness about one's motivations and the effects of one's actions on others, you will discover a tremendous untapped opportunity.

The rate of change in our globalized world has never been greater. Breakthrough technologies, demographic shifts, and political transformations make today's world more stressful than ever before. VUCA: volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.

The VUCA world increases leadership needs. Power lies at the top, and the impact leaders have on their companies' cultures, people, and results is significant. And weak leadership usually results from more than a lack of cognitive, strategic, and technical skills. Over two-thirds of managers throughout the world are rated as 'bad' by their employees. On top of that, roughly one-third of managers have a substantial risk of derailment.

Most businesspeople do not like to see their colleagues as being subject to conscious and unconscious anxieties, desires and conflicts. Universally, people paradoxically deny the presence of unconscious motivations but are continuously influenced by them.

Employees are pressured internally and externally. A 2017 study on the “[State of the Global Workplace](#)” concluded that 50 per cent of employees throughout the world had left their jobs to get away from their bosses. The study shows a clear link between employee performance and their relationship with their superiors.

The same study reveals that only 10-15 per cent of employees are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace. This statistic is alarming because the economic consequences of it represent trillions of dollars of lost productivity. Reasons for disengagement are related to leadership issues such as not listening, falsely being blamed, broken promises, micromanagement, bullying, and fraud.

In numbers

Disengagement leads to a reduction in performance and lower effectiveness. When employees lose confidence in their leaders, their motivation and expectation of the performance of their unit decline.

Assuming an average annual compensation of 140,000 Swiss Francs (CHF), net productivity of 25 per cent, and a lower effectiveness of 5 per cent, a company with 1,000 employees has annual losses of approximately 1.75 million CHF due to employee disengagement. Considering the costs of replacement and retraining amount to a year's salary and a 4 per cent increase in turnover rate, additional losses of 1.12 million CHF incur. In total, this company faces an annual loss of approximately 3 million CHF from its management lacking self-leadership skills. The good news is that leaders and their organizations can address this problem with self-leadership training. Leaders who cannot lead themselves cannot effectively lead others.

In today's fast-paced, interconnected world, leaders are expected to understand, decide, and act quickly. Leaders can only do this with an ongoing awareness of their inner state and the quality of their responses to situations. Such awareness is called self-awareness, which means to deeply understand one's own emotions, strengths, and limitations, recognizing one's values and motives and thinking things over rather than acting impulsively based on emotion. Developing such self-awareness does not happen overnight. It takes time and requires regular ongoing reflection. This is why so few leaders develop a strong sense of self-awareness until an impending crisis forces them to think deeply about themselves.

Epiphanies are not enough

Breaking habits and behaviours are not easy. A crisis may lead to an epiphany, but as valuable as an epiphany is to bring unconscious motivations into our consciousness, it is not enough on its own. Sustainable change occurs through small, incremental repeated choices and actions that bring the desired new behaviours. Sustainable change is a process. Self-leadership is critical for both the leader and their employees. Self-perception and self-leadership are central to breaking negative patterns.

Hindering blocks for getting into action

There are a few critical impediments that keep leaders and aspiring leaders from personal development and growth.

Resistance to change

Human beings tend to act on impulse. When presented with a challenge, they are prone to flee or fight, which is to disconnect or attack without a lot of thought. If we can learn which behaviours we are prone to, we can grab them the moment they show up, sit with them for a moment, make an empowered decision, and go down a more productive road. It takes practice, but it is ultimately choosing to be effective rather than reactive.

The first step is to bring a pattern of behaviour into our consciousness and decide whether it is productive. The second step is to learn from the past about where the behaviour comes from, and the third step is to rewrite the inner script around that behaviour and use the script to change our actions.

Shedding light on our less shiny side of ourselves can be an uncomfortable experience. But doing so will help us become better leaders. It empowers us to shape our future rather than let circumstances and other people dictate it.

In my interview with approximately 200 leaders, it is apparent that some leaders are more self-reflective and aware than others. Those who have experienced some coaching knew their strengths, weaknesses, and behaviours better. They were more consistent in their responses, especially in their use of power. Leaders who had had life-changing experiences were mixed; some were highly self-aware, others not. The differentiating factor was whether they engaged in personal reflection.

Cumbersome corporate decision-making process

Usually, we experience a high interest in our coaching and conferences by leaders and managers at all levels of the hierarchy, but too often, their interest in self-development gets lost in the labyrinths of decision making in their companies. Addressing the self-leadership needs of their employees isn't easy for leaders of both small and large companies. Take John, for example, a project leader at a European telecom company. He was able to attend the Self-Leadership Conference only after having obtained numerous department approvals.

Building a case for self-leadership coaching and education at a company starts with an assessment of the effectiveness of the leadership, engagement of employees, and the costs of recruitment and training.

John's situation was typical. He is responsible directly and indirectly for the performance of 200 employees. He has worked hard to climb the corporate ladder and strives to be a leader who lives up to the expectations of his superiors, teams, family and society. John, however, was not comfortable with his decision making in uncertain situations. He always wanted to have a solid understanding of all facts and risks as past experiences taught him that errors could torpedo his career. Even though his team provides him with complete information and flawless documentation, he is reluctant to make some decisions. His indecision frustrates his team members. Many doubt his leadership skills, disengage, and some leave the company. John's unit struggles.

Instead of incurring ongoing losses, John could invest a relatively small sum into self-leadership training and/or coaching for himself and his leaders. The consequences of increased self-leadership training at any level of an organization will positively impact engagement, create a better work atmosphere, boost productivity, and ultimately result in a larger bottom line. The return on investment (ROI) is significant.



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