Leadership

Introduction

Effective leadership centers on a crucial principle: leaders empower people and not the other way around. Putting people first is not only the most ethical way to lead, but also the most effective. After all, in any organization, the knowledge and skills of the people vastly exceed those of any one leader. Effective leaders do not try to lead with their own knowledge and skills alone, but rather tap the vast resources of the people in the organization and help to channel them toward success.

This approach requires leaders to listen, to build trust, to support, and, most of all, to believe in people. Listening enables leaders to learn from others and deploy their ideas. Equally important—and too often overlooked—is another, crucial lesson that comes from listening: only when leaders know what others are thinking and feeling can they serve and inspire them. Leaders also should seek to build trust, which, as Stephen M. R. Covey has argued in *The Speed of Trust*, facilitates progress in any organization. When people trust in leaders' abilities and integrity, they are more likely to contribute to the success of the organization. Support involves providing people with the tools they need to succeed: professional development and resources, but also emotional support. I have begun employing the "Four Simple Actions" strategy promoted by Indiana University Human Resources: "ASK me what I think," "TELL me what you expect of me," "SAY something positive about my work," and "SHARE information that will help me." Ultimately, effective leadership boils down to faith in people. When leaders believe that the people around them are capable and dedicated, they are more likely to empower them—and good things will happen.

Of course, there is much more to effective leadership—enough to fill countless books, articles, and podcasts on this topic. Without summarizing all of the possible tools and strategies, I will touch on three that are particularly important to me. First is integrity. For me, honesty, justice, and inclusion are both means and ends. Second is vision. The daily onslaught of pressing concerns makes it difficult to see what is possible, but one of the most important roles a leader can play is to help everyone realize a collective vision. Third is follow-through. After all, as Thomas Edison put it, "Vision without execution is hallucination." To become realities, good ideas require nurture and sheer tenacity.

Initiatives and Strategies

Take Five **newsletter**: The crucial element of communication in an organization can take many forms. Early in my career as a chief academic officer, I launched a weekly newsletter called *Take Five*. As the name suggests, it was designed to be a very brief summary requiring just a few minutes to read. Each issue includes a calendar of campus events, a section called "Kudos for Kokomojo" (shout-outs to faculty and staff who have gone the extra mile), the "Student Success Corner" (a tip to help keep students on track to graduation), one or more pictures of campus activities, and my column, in which I update the campus on recent developments,

offer thoughts on our work as educators, etc. Faculty and staff have responded enthusiastically.

Faculty and Staff Brown Bags: These weekly events provide opportunities for faculty and staff to interact informally over lunch. These social occasions, I believe, not only nurture a constructive campus culture, but also provide opportunities to discover possible collaborations and simply learn about one another's goals and daily work.

10,000 Stories Challenge: The company KPMG promotes purpose-driven work through its 10,000 Stories Challenge, which "gave employees access to a user-friendly design program and invited them to create posters that would answer the question 'What do you do at KPMG?' while capturing their passion and connecting it to the organization's purpose" (Quinn and Thakor). I see great promise in this exercise, and I would be interested in launching something similar.

Loglines: In an article for the *Harvard Business Review*, Carmine Gallo advocates "loglines," summaries that screenwriters use to pitch their scripts. "According to molecular biologist John Medina of the University of Washington School of Medicine, the human brain craves meaning before details," Gallo explains. "When a listener doesn't understand the overarching idea being presented in a pitch, they have a hard time digesting the information. A logline will help you paint the big picture for your audience." In a similar vein, I have drafted statements—aimed at different audiences— to describe and promote IU Kokomo's KEY initiative.

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