

Want to be Extraordinary?

When I'm coaching leaders, managers and supervisors there's a single notion that sometimes comes up at some point in one of our coaching conversations. The notion and it's paraphrased in many ways is, "I want to be liked." or, "I want to be 'one of the guys' (read: gender neutral)." How about you? Does this thought ever cross your mind when you reflect on your relationship with your team members or direct reports? Be honest. Wanting to be liked is, in fact, a natural tendency. The important consideration is, as a leader, manager or supervisor, are you liked for the right reasons?

I've come across leaders, managers and supervisors who go out of their way to cultivate this type of friendship take folks to lunch, buy folks drinks after work, hand out tickets to a sporting or theatre event, give gifts, lavish one with false praise, overlook mistakes, etc. folks who are "giving to get" the friendship they seek, want or need.

The idea of "giving to get" is destined to backfire. Why? Because sooner or later you'll become co-opted by your need to be seen as a friend to the extent that this need will adversely affect your decision-making process decisions, often tough decisions, that need to be made that affect your direct reports or teammates. Eventually, you'll find putting "friendship" first will be to the detriment of business or team goals. Simply, you'll eventually derail because you're afraid of upsetting your friends, or losing friendships.

The "friendship" challenge needs to be tempered by self-responsibility. As a leader, manager or supervisor, you need to see that, in reality, you cannot be "one of the guys" *and* lead or manage effectively. Self-responsibility means that you are not "one of the guys", that your focus, drive and direction are often apart from that of the "guys." That you must be above issues that distract "the guys" so you can provide clear, concise, and objective guidance and direction, from the "outside looking in." You are a driver, not a passenger. And you must assume the responsibility that comes with being a driver.

What does this mean? It means that as a self-responsible leader, manager or supervisor, you cannot engage in gossiping, cannot engage in "bad-mouthing" management or others when problems and challenges arise. Being self-responsible means that you choose to solve problems, not look to blame others for problems. Being self-responsible means you control your emotions and reactivity to people, events and circumstances, that you are "emotionally intelligent" and self-aware, when others (the rest of "the guys") may be caught up in their reactivity and acting like emotional five-year olds. Being self-responsible means you tell the truth, regardless of how the truth impacts your direct reports, your teammates, your friendships.

So, being extraordinary as a leader, manager or supervisor means consciously choosing *not* to be ordinary. The extraordinary leader, manager or supervisor is not obsessed or preoccupied by needing to be "one of the guys", be a "good buddy" or by needing to be liked. The extraordinary leader, manager or supervisor consciously chooses to lead, manage and supervise in a manner that is fair, consistent, authentic, in integrity, compassionate, trustworthy, and positive even if it means not be accepted as "one of the guys." Being extraordinary is all about being respected for doing "things right", for being self-responsible, and not for doing "the right thing", "going along", or being duplicitous in order to be liked.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- Do you consider yourself to be an extraordinary leader, manager or supervisor?
- Do you allow your needing to be liked to get in the way of doing things right?

- Do you ever "give to get" If so, how?
- What would your life at work be like if you chose not to "give to get?"
- Would your colleagues, direct reports and teammates say you are trustworthy?
- Are you fair in how you treat and regard your direct reports and teammates? Have you ever asked your direct reports or teammates? Would you?
- When do you vacillate between being a driver and a passenger? Why?
- Does your need for friendship cause you to lose focus on the important things?
- Does your boss "pander" to you in order to gain your friendship?
- What one baby step can you take to become more self-responsible and less reliant on needing to be liked? How does it feel to even consider this question?

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