

## Deccan Herald - DH Avenues

# Discover and tap the leadership qualities in you

**PERFORMING ART** Leadership is a combination of inherent qualities, traits and action taken

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Leadership perhaps is one of the most researched and written about subjects and not as much understood. Jim Collins, author of the best-seller "Good to Great" put it very aptly when he said, "At this moment, leadership has replaced God in filling a gap in our understanding." The leadership journey is marked by many milestones with each of them representing a different level of understanding. First, it was about special traits that leaders possess; second, it is all about styles leaders adopt; third, it centered on competencies leaders build and demonstrate. Interestingly enough, most of the published literature focused on attributes leaders are identified with.

Leadership is a performing art:

Fundamentally, let us not forget the fact that leaders are re-



quired to produce results. While describing leadership as an art, it would only be apt to underscore that it more than an art; it is more precisely a "performing art." So, results are

as important as attributes are. Leaders become branded leaders when they combine both the desired attributes and the desired results delivered in the most ethical manner. Given this understanding of leadership, it is fairly simple to conclude that leadership is more action than position. All of us can be leaders. If fact, if our organisations have to succeed, all of us must believe in being leaders and behave like one. We may be the front office assistant or the corner office CEO. Leadership is for all us to take on. This article presents a simple set of behaviors we must demonstrate as leaders. During difficult times like the one we are going through in our economies and organisations, it is even more timely and pertinent that we discover leadership inside each of us and help our organisations sail through difficult waters. By no means an exhaustive list, the following are some of the foundation bricks for standing tall as leaders. These are presented as

attributes and results for ease of understanding—

**Becoming a branded leader:** attributes and results every one can deliver. Every day attributes leaders at all levels must demonstrate include:

■ **Passion for our business:** Hallmark of leadership is a palpable passion for the business we are in. Passion produces far superior results in every endeavor we are engaged. Without it, we will fall short of operational excellence in our daily routines and disappoint our customers' big time. When you have passion, you walk the extra mile to make things happen for your company and your valued clients.

■ **Problem ownership:** When you check into a world class hotel, you know you can ask anyone of their staff for a service. You don't have to worry about whether the staffer you are talking is from front-office or back office.

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### Discover the leadership qualities...

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He or she will own the problem and have the solution delivered by the folks responsible for solving your problem. It is leadership behavior to own the problem when presented to you by your customers and continue to own it till you have transferred it to the legitimate owner for a solution. Playing ping-pong with the problem and tossing it over is anti-leadership behavior.

■ **Process adherence:** Contrary to popular impressions that leaders break processes, good leaders follow the processes. More importantly, they challenge the processes all the time with the sole intention of making it better. Viewed creatively, organisations are but network of processes and people. And they must make each other more efficient on a daily basis.

■ **Prioritised commitments:** Each day marks a set of commitments to fulfill and there lies the successful performance. Leadership behavior calls for establishing careful priorities so that first things get done first. It is leadership behavior because it involves setting priorities in the context of larger priorities of our departments, functions and the organisation.

■ **A bias for action:** Leadership behavior is acting, not freezing, during ambiguous moments. When in doubt, leaders move and act. Focus and energy are key ingredients for excelling in execution.

■ **Exploring the unexplored options:** Everyday life both inside and outside organisations is full of overwhelming demands and often combined with unbearable constraints. You can

only pole-vault these two with exploring the unexplored choices! It boils down to a mindset change by thinking out-of-box rather than feeling boxed!

■ **Understanding the big picture:** It is very easy to bury oneself in the immediacy of what one is expected to deliver given one's role. Leadership behavior is about understanding the big picture into which what you do fits in. This tremendously aids in making sure there is a reasonable overlap and nothing falls through the cracks as is often the case when big picture is not in front.

Every day results leaders at all levels produce include the following:

■ **Being credible:** Make no mistakes, credibility is an outcome of many little things you do every day. You build this reputation by fulfilling commitments, walking the talk and doing as you say you will do!

■ **Developing yourself:** Leaders build their muscles by learning every day. They learn by doing, by sharing, by reading and reflecting. They understand that the half life of knowledge is fast shrinking

■ **Meeting & exceeding goals:** Where quantitative goals are part of the deliverables, as they often are, leadership executes on meeting them. Leaders produce results, not alibis!

■ **Keeping productive relationships at work:** Work in organisations is a collaborative effort. Relationships are investments people make and not something they pull out of a magic hat! You reach out seeking help and extending help, you seek and give feedback and bring to bear your emotional

intelligence (self awareness, self control and self motivation) to build productive and positive relationships at work.

■ **Build your company brand:** Brand today is much more than what your products or services are known for. It is what people are known for! When you translate your customer expectations into your daily behavior, you become a brand that the customer feels good to associate with. By doing so, the collective brand experience for your company becomes synonymous with how the customers experience you and your colleagues.

■ **Solving problems:** Every day presents opportunities for you to be either part of the problem or be part of the solution. Leaders choose to be part of the solution in any whichever way they can.

■ **Sharing resources:** Resources are not infinite in their supply, not even water and air! Leaders deliver role model results by achieving more with less.

So, if you would like to become a leader, behave like a leader. After all, leaders are what they make of themselves. Hierarchy has little to do with behaving like a leader. It actually embraces and elevates those who choose to behave like leaders and produce the results that are distinctly superior. Each of us has an opportunity to become a branded leader by practicing right attributes and delivering right results. What better place to start than your present organisation?

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