The missing capabilities of the Leadership Team – Let the employees evaluate!

As a leadership development consultant, I come across many people in senior management positions who think that leadership comes from their fancy title or level of responsibility, and are most often than not, blissfully unaware of what leadership characteristics the organization demands from them. In most cases, these are people who have been promoted to senior management based on their operational ability (and sometimes for reasons which are not necessarily organizational) and not on their leadership abilities. It's not surprising therefore, that they fail to display the fundamental leadership behaviors that inspire confidence and faith amongst the employees in the organization. How can we allow such people to lead our organization to success?

During my leadership workshops, I ask senior managers – what difference have you made to the organization in terms of your personal contribution as a leader? How many leaders have you developed across different levels of the organization? What new things have you done to inculcate and facilitate leadership behaviors across the organization? Unfortunately, these are amongst a few questions that senior 'leaders' in the organization are uncomfortable with.

So I guess, it's now time to turn around to take a 360° view of the entire situation and ask the employees to do the following important checks on the organizational leaders. They should evaluate the leadership qualities of their leadership team members and decide whether they are role models and are fit to 'lead' them. Here are some quick checks to help them decide whether their leadership team members have the ABILITY TO -

1) **Communicate a shared understanding of the Company's vision, mission and strategic imperatives** – The ability to understand the direction of the organization and create a consensus to achieve that. Whether this is done in small work groups or in large divisions, the leader must make sure that each and every employee must be able to articulate the organization's strategy and

purpose his/ her colleague, superior, subordinate, customer and to the society at large. This leads me to the next 2 points.

2) **Create an Entrepreneurship mindset** – Do the leaders have an entrepreneurial mindset - the ability to treat the organization as their own business, with a desire to 'own' the success and failures and do whatever is necessary within a certain framework to make the organization successful and healthy. Are they able to develop and encourage entrepreneurs in the organization?

3) **Lead Courageously** – Many leaders in the public and private sectors lack the courage necessary to accept responsibility and be accountable for their decisions. A fundamental aspect of leadership is to have the courage to make hard decisions; to empower people to take intelligent risks and to stand behind by them and to support the values and ethics of an organization even at the cost of personal loss. Is this ability reflected adequately in the leadership team?

4) **Exhibit Credibility** – The ability to 'walk the talk' or a habit of 'doing what you say you'll do'. The inspiration and trust build by a credible leader with a strong 'moral compass' is based on principles of integrity, transparency, fairness and a willingness to 'lead by example'. Is this aspect lacking in the leadership team members?

5) **Be Empathetic** – As a leader of people, the leader needs to be engaged with the employees, understand them and empathize with them. The ability to listen, understand, and relate is a fundamental leadership quality which gets reflected in the leader's ability to lead with emotional intelligence and humility.

6) **Encourages Collaboration** – Good leader collaborate and engage at every level of the organization. Too often, senior leaders are focused on protecting their turf by relying on a leadership style of using command and control tactics instead of seeking opportunities to influence the behaviors of others by teaching collaboration. They seem to have forgotten the basic management principle that you are only as good as your people make you! Do your leadership team members strive for success through their individual pursuits and ignore the efforts of the team?

7) **Believe in Empowerment** - I believe many leaders today under-utilize and underestimate the talent within their organizations. I have seen many wonderfully talented people leave organizations, not because of money, but because they weren't challenged or given an opportunity to contribute fully to the organization. Leaders who allow talent to take intelligent risk, support them behind the scenes to set them up for success, and use failure as a means of learning rather than blaming, will ultimately take an organization further than one who manages by command/control/edit. Coupled to this is the issue of development. Are the members of the leadership team developing and nurturing fledgling leaders in the organization or are they scared of the 'young turks' taking over their territory and therefore promoting mediocrity?

Finally, the leadership team members should be evaluated on their Charisma - The ability and will to create and spread great ideas and lead people in fulfilling those, their ability to respect their team members, their ability to commit to the development of their team members and their ability to adhere to diversity and inclusion norms within the organization.

It's therefore imperative that employees should be allowed to 'show the mirror' to the incompetent leadership team members who are unaware of their developmental needs as a transformational leader in the organization.

If we can get it out of our heads that "anyone can be a leader" and allow our employees to choose who should actually be 'leading' the organization, things would be different in most organizations today.

However, this takes a lot of courage and conviction and a huge amount of self-awareness on the part of the leadership team. *Is your leadership team ready to take the risk and take the challenge of employees evaluating them?*