



INSPIRATION

Leadership is a combination of strategy and character. If you must be without one, be without the strategy.

-Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf

Character. Intuitively we know that character is critical for leadership. Can you build character or is it something you are just born with? People often say that experience builds character. Do you believe it? I do. Which experiences helped build your character? Write some down and reflect on how they shaped you. What experiences might continue building your character? Ask your friends and colleagues for suggestions. Have you given any thought to building character in others? What experiences might they need?

At the heart of this lies an obvious question; what do we mean by character? The relevant dictionary definitions try to capture the meaning with phrases like individual style, mental or moral strength, reputation or personality. I would like to share a few insights into the definition of character. First, people with character have a high degree of internal integrity. "To thine own self be true" is Shakespeare's advice on this point. Without this aspect, leadership would ultimately violate the self. Second, people with character have a high degree of integrity in dealing with others. They are people who are their word. Without this aspect, efforts to demonstrate leadership will not produce action in others.

I like General Schwarzkopf's quote. Given his military background, one might expect, "Leadership is a combination of hierarchical authority and character." However, the General knows that leadership can happen at all levels of an organization. I might adapt the quote to say, "Leadership is a combination of vision, strategy and character that produces action." But that's not as catchy as the original. How would you adapt the quote?

-Alan

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