

## **WHAT FOLLOWERS REALLY WANT IN A LEADER**

**By: Rick Boxx**

Have you ever worked for a leader you just could not help but follow? The company I began working with after college was managed by such a person. I recall a time when one of my peers told me that Mr. Mills wanted to see me. This coworker forewarned me that I was about to be asked to do something I would be dead-set against doing.

However, several minutes into my meeting I found myself thoroughly infected with Mr. Mills' infectious enthusiasm, kindness, respect and dignity. As I left work that day, I was amazed by how a task that had seemed so distasteful had become transformed by this leader into a challenge I was looking forward to taking on – and conquering.

People enjoy following a gifted leader, someone that inspires and motivates them to work to their greatest capabilities – and perhaps even beyond what they thought they could do. In contrast, there are many people in the workplace who are regarded as leaders, but who upon close examination have no devoted followers. So what makes the difference?

Barna Research Ltd., a major international research organization, in 1997 conducted a poll to determine what people desired and expected in a leader. The top five responses were the ability to:

- Motivate people to get involved (87%)
- Negotiate a compromise when there is conflict (78%)
- Identify the correct course of action to take (77%)
- Make decisions which are in the best interests of the people, even if those decisions might not be popular (76%)
- Train and develop other leaders to help (75%)

In the Bible's Old Testament, Proverbs 14:28 teaches, "*A large population is a king's glory, but without subjects a prince is ruined.*" Many people believe once they receive a position of authority, people will follow automatically, just on the basis of their status. Often, however, this positional authority results in the boss standing alone in the heat of battle.

By comparison, the effective leader recognizes the fact that positional authority is meaningless without the willing support and cooperation of the staff. As Proverbs states elsewhere, "*When a country is rebellious, it has many rulers, but a man of understanding and knowledge maintains order*" (Proverbs 28:2). As many true leaders have observed, "You win with people."

If you are a leader and want willing subjects that enthusiastically will follow you into the many battles of the workplace, remember what it requires to get them there. A strong leader motivates others; negotiates conflicts skillfully; charts a clear, well-conceived course of action; seeks and serves the people's best interest, and develops future leaders. Which of these five will you need to address this week?

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### **Reflection/Discussion Questions**

1. What are the most important qualities that you look for in a leader? Do you agree with the list given in this "Monday Manna"? Explain your answer.
2. Who was the most memorable leader that you ever worked for? What made that person particularly outstanding?
3. How would you evaluate yourself as a leader? What qualities, if any, do you believe need to be developed or improved?
4. Someone has made the comment, "If you think of yourself as a leader but have no devoted followers, you are not leading – you are just going for a walk." Do you agree? Why or why not?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to consider other passages that relate to this topic, look up the following verses:

*Proverbs 11:14, 15:22, 27:23-27; Ephesians 6:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4*