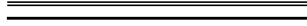
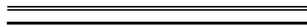


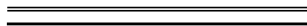
**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**



**Promotion:
Leadership Ability as the Deciding Factor**



**A Leadership White Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**



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ABSTRACT

Organizations often base their promotion process on seniority, experience, and education. It should come as no surprise when bad leaders cause the downfall of these same organizations. Good leadership is required to lead organizations to success. Any organization, business, public service provider, trainer, or consultant firm will benefit from good leadership. Good businesses are usually led by good leaders because good employees are more willing to follow the better leaders. Negative perceptions by the public can easily be countered through good leadership. Promotion processes based on other non-essential criteria are likely to result in bad leadership, and bad leadership causes dysfunction throughout the organization and limits the good informal leaders. Although some may have their reservations regarding this idea, evidence suggests that leadership is the most important criteria for the success of an organization. Administrators should begin to allow leadership ability to become the primary deciding factor for promoting employees rather than seniority.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction.....	1
Position.....	2
Counter Position.....	6
Recommendation	9
References	12

INTRODUCTION

Most workers can say they have worked for a bad supervisor. What exactly makes a bad supervisor is up for debate; however, one's leadership ability is usually a good indicator of what constituents will think of a supervisor. Organizational success should be the primary goal of any good executive. Whether the particular business is involved in sales such as retail, consulting such as management firms, or providing services such as law enforcement agencies, success is always the primary goal of the organization. History has proven that leadership of organizations is the primary reason for that organization's success or failure. It seems illogical, then, for organizations to base promotions primarily on other factors like seniority, experience, or education. Many organizations will base promotions on these factors and then attempt to train the newly promoted in the area of leadership. Many times it is only after employees are already promoted that administrators learn the individual is either not a good leader or cannot learn leadership very well. This creates a recipe for disaster for that organization.

As long as organizations promote for reasons other than leadership ability, at times, they will find the wrong person in a position of authority. Experience, tenure, and education are generally not considered attributes of great leaders. While many great leaders will have these things, it is not a requirement to be a great leader. Leadership is what determines an organization's success. History has proven that young leaders with little experience can take an organization to new levels of success; likewise, history has also shown that even some of the most experienced people make some of the worst leaders. Organizations need good leadership to help counter negative perceptions.

This is especially true today in the area of law enforcement and other public service entities. Promoting good leaders helps ensure that only people with a high level of integrity are in the highest positions. Not only does promoting leaders help organizations, but promoting bad leaders can easily hurt an organization. This creates dysfunction and limits the good leaders. Organizations today should consider abolishing old habits of basing promotions on seniority and instead use a candidate's leadership ability as the primary deciding factor.

POSITION

Throughout America's history, great leaders developed some of the most successful businesses in the world. According to Maxwell (1998), everything rises and falls on leadership. His law of the lid states that no matter how successful an organization is in other areas, the level of leadership at the top determines how high that organization can rise. It does not matter if the business involves retail, food production, or providing a service, how successful that organization is relies on the leadership ability of those making the decisions. Successful organizations are always led by good leaders. Although there are organizations with good leaders that do not become successful, all those that are successful are led by good leaders. Kouzes and Posner (2012) described countless examples of modern, failing organizations getting revitalized by better leaders. Some of these examples include Pierfrancesco Ronzi with McKinsey & Company, a business management consultant firm; Barby Siegel, CEO of Zeno Group, a public relations firm; and Rob Pearson, Senior Director of Research and Development of Seattle Genetics, a biotechnology company. Had it not been for these great leaders, these organizations would not be as successful as they are today. It

seems obvious that promoting only the best leaders should be the primary focus of any promotion board; however, organizations often determine the next supervisor through other factors.

One might ask themselves why this phenomenon occurs. Some may think money, experience, or appearance should determine the next supervisor of an organization. Money, experience, and appearance are not what influence other people the most. Maxwell (1998) said, "The true measure of leadership is influence-nothing more, nothing less" (p. 11). One's ability to influence other people is the true measure of leadership. Although someone can easily influence others with money or promises, that is not lasting influence. Employees are more willing to follow good leaders. If leaders can develop a strong vision for an organization, and live that vision themselves, constituents are more likely to follow in those same footsteps and take on that vision in their own lives (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Good leaders know to develop productive visions for their organizations. Anderson (2013) stated, "When good leadership is in place at a company, it can be felt throughout the entire organization...The result of good leadership is high morale, good employee retention, and sustainable long-term success" (p. 1).

Promoting employees based on leadership ability not only helps lead the organization to success, it also helps to counter any negative perceptions previously held by the public. Trust is an essential part of good leadership. Good leaders know that lying to the public or consumers is a practice that will usually result in failure. This is especially true with the issues facing law enforcement organizations today. Integrity is one of the primary characteristics of any good leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). The

United States government, sports teams, law enforcement agencies, and businesses have found themselves involved in some type of scandal that caused public scrutiny and mistrust. Although these organizations and administrations may have been successful at first, the lack of integrity caused a downfall, and the public lost faith and trust.

Great leaders help not only to minimize these negative actions by organizations, but they help to repair public damage created by their predecessors that caused the issues in the first place. Duggar (2011) stated that corporate leaders must have a high level of integrity. This creates an environment of shared values, financial success, high morale, and transparency for the public. Transparency throughout organizations, especially law enforcement agencies today, is required to maintain public trust and bounce back from mishaps that are inevitable at some point. Forbes Magazine ("5 Most Publicized," 2013) described some of the most famous incidents where organizations were destroyed because of a lack of integrity from leaders. Kenneth Lay of Enron ruined one of the largest audit firms in the world. Bernard Ebbers, CEO of Worldcom, a telecommunications corporation, had to file for bankruptcy after Ebbers was involved in an accounting scandal. Dennis Kozlowski, CEO of Tyco, a large security and electronics company, was sentenced to prison after stealing millions of dollars of the company's assets. It is easy to see that integrity plays a big part on the success, or failure, of any organization. The best leaders have good integrity. Rather than focusing on how long someone has been with an organization, focusing on leadership ability is the better factor for determining who should lead.

Focusing on the benefits of promoting good leaders is only half of the equation to understanding why some organizations are successful and some fail. One must also understand how these bad leaders affect organizations. In addition to the previously mentioned examples of bad leaders causing failure through a lack of integrity, some other consequences of promoting for the wrong reasons include limiting those good leaders that were passed over and dysfunction created throughout organizations caused by having bad leaders at the top. Administrators must empower the good leaders of an organization so they can begin to affect the organization as a whole.

Maxwell (1993) stated that empowerment is the sign of any good leader. As soon as an organization begins to empower the good informal leaders, the organization's level of success will begin to rise. By empowering others, organizations can gain influence from more than just those at the top. Ensuring that informal leaders are empowered into positions of formal leadership is likely to increase the organization's effectiveness and efficiency. Companies cannot limit their good leaders by promoting based on other, non-essential, traits. Seniority, age, and often even experience, are not indicators of leadership ability.

Perkins (2010) said the empowered become leaders, and leaders become empowered. Do not empower the wrong people. Ensure that only the best informal leaders of the organization are empowered enough to become the formal leaders, and the organization has a much better chance of becoming, or remaining, successful. Bad leaders usually cause problems throughout organizations. Jones (2005) said, "The leadership team is the most important asset of the company and can be its worst enemy. A failed business is the result of poor performance. Poor performance is the

result of an incompetent, or dysfunctional, leadership team” (p. 1). Organizations that promote employees based on the “good ‘ole boy” system, seniority alone, or simply knowledge test scores, are more likely to inadvertently promote people that are not good leaders. Many of these same organizations are then surprised at how poorly operations seem to be. It should come as no surprise; an organization's success relies solely on the leadership of that organization. Knowledge and experience are easily gained over time; however, leadership attributes such as integrity, good communication skills, and decisiveness are not easily learned. By promoting the best leaders throughout an organization, those who do not have leadership ability are less-likely to negatively affect the whole organization.

COUNTER POSITION

Although it seems like common sense to promote informal leaders into formal leaders, some may have reservations as to whether or not leadership ability is the best indicator for who makes the best supervisors. One could claim that knowledge and experience are the most important factors for deciding who to promote in an organization. As previously stated, knowledge is easily gained, especially by someone that is already a good leader. Maxwell (1993) described numerous accounts of companies that hired new leaders unfamiliar with the details of the work of the companies; but because the new CEOs, supervisors, and executives were good leaders, they were able to lead the companies to success, regardless of their initial lack of knowledge of company procedures. During the promotional process, administrators should look at a candidate's ability to communicate, envision, and empower others as more important than simply knowledge of the field. Although some knowledge may be

necessary, it should not be the deciding factor on who to promote. Experience is something else administrators might require when deciding whom to promote. This could be true in some instances where work knowledge is necessary to actively participate in the hands-on daily routine by a supervisor, but this can also be learned in most cases. As the leader, it is not his or her responsibility to do all the actual work in many cases, but it is to lead those to success who do the actual work. Leaders are readers, and any good leader would actively gain knowledge necessary to effectively lead any group of people. Knowledge and experience comes naturally to anyone, but leadership ability has more to do with character and attributes.

Gerber (2014) interviewed several entrepreneurs to find out if they preferred technical skill or leadership qualities in employees. Chris Cancialosi, of GothamCulture, an organizational culture consultant, stated “Technical experts can oftentimes make terrible entrepreneurs because they love doing the work so much that they are unwilling or unable to step out of the expert role in order to spend their energies running and growing their businesses” (Gerber, 2014, para. 7). Alexis Wolfer, founder of TheBeauty Bean, a women’s online magazine named Top Ten Women’s Lifestyle websites by Forbes Magazine, stated “Leadership skills, however, are paramount for success. As an entrepreneur, it’s less important to know how to do everything and much more important to know how to outsource everything you can’t do” (Gerber, 2014, para. 6). So, while it may seem to some that knowledge, skill level, or experience should be the number one reason to promote someone, many successful business owners and CEOs would disagree and say leadership ability is more important for an organization’s success.

Another reason some administrators might stray away from using leadership ability as the primary promotion criteria is fear of causing resentment among senior members of the organization that are denied supervisory positions to younger candidates. Dwyer (2014) described examples of real people seeking advice after getting passed over for promotion. They became disgruntled and felt someone else took a position that they deserved due to tenure or experience. This should come as no surprise. Most have encountered those people who hold a grudge because of decisions management made.

But, as long as organizations are taking steps to ensure employees are trained in leadership this should not be a problem. John Maxwell's Law of Explosive Growth states that an organization's growth will continue exponentially if administrators grow leaders, not just good employees. He said "The key to growth is leadership. To add growth, lead followers. To multiply, lead leaders" (Maxwell, 1998, p.205).

Organizations should be teaching employees leadership so that they can choose who the best leaders are and promote them. Those senior employees who choose not to partake in the vision of great leadership will simply not experience a formal leadership position. Administrators can take steps to explain to these employees why they were not given the position. Morgan (n.d.) suggested sitting disgruntled employees down to explain exactly where they are lacking. Many employees sometimes truly do not understand what they need to do to become better leaders. Leadership is a learned process. As long as the organization pushes leadership on its employees, the best leaders will show their faces. Those that choose to blame others for their not getting

selected are probably not the type of leader an organization needs supervising employees in the first place.

RECOMMENDATION

One can easily see the benefits of ensuring good leaders fill positions designed for leaders. Organizations need to ensure they are promoting individuals with good leadership ability rather than using old methods of seniority and experience alone as deciding factors for promotion. Promoting good leaders accomplishes a number of things. First, as Maxwell (1998) stated, an organization is only as successful as the leadership over that organization. Successful businesses are led by good leaders; likewise, failed organizations are usually led by bad leaders. Employees are more willing to follow good leaders that have a strong organizational vision. Next, organizations need good leaders to help counter negative perceptions by the public. If a mishap occurs in a company, good leadership is required to help the company bounce back from negative perceptions. This is especially true for public service entities such as law enforcement agencies. Good leaders have a high level of integrity. This is invaluable when something happens that causes mistrust. Not only will good leaders help the organization in that circumstance, but they will also help to prevent it from ever happening in the first place. Duggar (2011) explained that if good leaders are able to formally lead an organization, they can build values among the employees similar to their own. Last, administrators need to promote only the best leaders because promoting the bad ones causes dysfunction and limits those that should have been promoted. The good informal leaders that want, and can, make positive change are limited if a bad leader controls what they do. Jones (2005) stated that organizations fail

usually because of bad leadership at the top. Administrators must ensure they are empowering those informal leaders so they can positively affect the rest of the organization.

Some may disagree at first and claim that knowledge and experience are more important than leadership ability. It is easily argued that knowledge and experience are easier learned than leadership ability. Leadership quality has more to do with character and personal attributes. Good leaders are learners; therefore, they are more likely to try and learn whatever is needed to successfully lead in that environment. Maxwell (1993) described numerous accounts of new leaders coming into organizations, with little experience in that particular field, and creating great success. Gerber (2014) asked several entrepreneurs if they preferred technical skills or leadership ability. Several of them claimed leadership ability as most important. Other critics claim that organizations will suffer from disgruntled senior employees if they are passed up for promotion.

Although this may be true, one has to consider why those employees are really disgruntled. Morgan (n.d.) provided direction for dealing with these kinds of employees. If administrators ensure that leadership ability is a value of the organization and train employees early on to be leaders, disgruntled senior employees are likely to be passed over for promotion because they chose not to take on the responsibility of learning good leadership skills. If an employee becomes disgruntled because he or she dislikes decisions made from above, perhaps that individual would not make the best leader to begin with.

Organizations need to begin looking at their promotion processes and deciding how administrators can make better decisions of whom to put in supervisory positions.

If an organization's success relies primarily on leadership, it makes sense to ensure that only the best leaders are promoted. Agencies should stop basing promotions on the "good 'ole boy" system, seniority, and education alone. While some of these attributes could be advantageous for leaders, their ability to lead and influence others is more important for success. They should come up with a better system for measuring employees' leadership ability and potential such as leadership assessment boards, past leadership effects evaluations, or peer and subordinate reviews. Agencies should train employees to be leaders from the time they are hired. If administrators keep track of their progress and monitor the level of positive influence throughout the organization, they can ensure that only the best leaders are promoted to positions of authority. All organizations today should base their promotions on good leadership ability rather than the outdated methods requiring seniority to be the deciding factor.

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