

Tips for admins who want to think like leaders

Prepare for the worst when you're way ahead Does your organization run austerity drills? Get together with staff once in a while and ask them, "If things suddenly went south for us tomorrow, where would we make financial cuts to keep us afloat?" Few have the foresight to envision tough times when the profits are rolling in, but don't let complacency make you forget that belt-tightening should never truly stop.

A tip on motivation from Eisenhower "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done—because he *wants* to do it." - *Dwight D. Eisenhower*

Don't fall for the game of What If People love to ask lofty hypothetical questions of leaders—sometimes in an attempt to grab a juicy sound bite—but there's no reason to dig yourself a hole by responding to them. Sidestep that game and convince others you've got a rational head on your shoulders by replying this way: "I prefer to deal with what we know and what is real. That's how better decisions are made."

To the persistent go the answers People usually have at least two reasons for accepting or rejecting your ideas: one that's meant to sound good to you, and another that they keep to themselves. If you want to uncover that hidden reason, politely ask: "In addition to that first argument, what *else* is stopping you from going ahead?" That way, they'll understand you're determined to look more deeply into them, and you just might win them over on their terms.

Is it better to make everyone happy, or to simply lead? "Consensus: The process of abandoning all beliefs, principles, values and policies in search of something in which no one believes, but to which no one objects; the process of avoiding the very issues that have to be solved, merely because you cannot get agreement on the way ahead. What great cause would have been fought and won under the banner: 'I stand for consensus?'" - *Margaret Thatcher*

Pull back the troops for when the biggest battles come Leadership means knowing when to concede as much as knowing when to fight; the next time you're about to enter a power struggle whose outcome isn't exactly life or death, think of what you might gain if you were to simply lay down your arms and give in to the opposition. It could be an excellent opportunity to score quick points for maturity, reason, courtesy, diplomacy—all without giving up much at all, making you the real winner. And now you've essentially re-armed yourself for the next fight, and have high ground to stand on.

Are you giving the crowd something new? Before you take the stage for your next presentation, ask yourself this question: How many times in the last year has this crowd heard a speech just like the one I'm about to give?

Why leave the building to generate ideas? An executive retreat can easily be held on site, as long as the atmosphere is changed in some way to accentuate the casual. Set no hard agendas and have food brought in throughout the day while insisting on a no-cellphones, no-interruptions policy. Break things up with games or unusual team-building exercises, and above all, dress down, putting the emphasis on minds, ideas and camaraderie rather than job titles and image-boosting.

Turning failure to your advantage President John F. Kennedy's popularity soared after the botched Bay of Pigs invasion. Why? Americans admired how he accepted responsibility for the plan gone awry and displayed such forthrightness. Psychologists call it the "strategic pratfall effect" because you enhance your stature by demonstrating your mettle in the face of humiliation.

The quickest way to the people's heart is through nostalgia Honda launched an online campaign to save the country's drive-in movie theaters from extinction, citing the connection between cars and the treasured old way of taking in a flick. Such a campaign is a reminder that those who can evoke shared golden memories are likely to quickly gain the audience's attention.

The necessity of getting crazy Truly respected leaders tend to have this in common: They've all had extraordinary experiences outside of the workplace that make for great stories. If you've never traveled boldly, put yourself in danger, or simply done something utterly crazy and foolhardy, it's tough for people to embrace your legend.

Better good than perfect? Wisdom from EDS Chairman and CEO Dick Brown: Do-it-now people propel your organization to greatness. Perfectionists are too cautious to move fast enough to keep you competitive. - Adapted from "25 Rules for Leaders," Linda Tischler, *Fast Company*.

Take the time to notice and comment Take the time to notice and comment on the photos and other objects that people display in their offices. Employees display them as an expression of pride. When you ask questions about them, you connect with people on a personal level.

Make your opinion count When asked your opinion, try to summarize your view in one sentence. Then pause to give others a chance to piggyback on it or ask follow-up questions. If you ramble on too long, you can undermine your own arguments and/or bore your listener. One reasonable argument is better—and more memorable—than a dissertation.