



Transformational Leadership & Service Podcast

Episode 17 Transcript

The Key to Confidence

Let's begin by asking an important question. Have you ever known anyone - a family member, friend, neighbor, co-worker, boss, subordinate - who has failed to reach his or her personal or professional potential for apparently no other reason than they lacked confidence in themselves and their abilities? Maybe it would help if the question was a bit more personal. Have you ever struggled with some task or undertaking simply because you didn't have that critical foundation – personal confidence – to succeed? Or to even try? What was the end result? How did the situation make you feel? Was it a pleasant, rewarding experience? More important, is there a way to correct this problem and keep it from rearing its ugly head again?

When I ask these questions in my public presentations, I am always overwhelmed by the percentage of people who readily admit that such problems do exist. Lack of confidence appears to be a widespread malady. If so, then it stands as a leadership issue that needs to be addressed. To tackle this problem, we must first realize there is only one thing that will serve to build confidence in any human being. But, before we identify that one thing, let's eliminate at least three things that definitely won't build confidence.

First, confidence is not established as a result of effort alone. There are many industrious individuals who work long and hard at their respective jobs or tasks. Yet, in the end too many of them realize that confidence is not a by-product of their considerable efforts.

Secondly, confidence is not established as a result of education alone. Advanced degrees or intense study will certainly broaden one's understanding of a specific subject area, but a stronger foundation of personal confidence is not necessarily built on education alone.

Finally, confidence is not established as a result of repetitive actions alone. Doing something over and over may improve your comfort level with the process, but it won't make you more confident in yourself and the ultimate outcome.

So what is it then that serves to make one person soar with confidence, while another quakes in his or her boots? What is that one thing that will serve to build confidence in any and every human being? That one thing is success. Simple, garden variety success. Think about it. With every success - large or small – our confidence in ourselves, our abilities and our potential increases. As we bask in the warm afterglow of personal success, our confidence always surges. During this momentary surge in confidence, we allow ourselves the opportunity of thinking

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about and trying new things. The key to confidence building therefore, for ourselves or others, is to continuously focus on individual success. Large or small, all successes are worthwhile.

Here's an activity. Make a list of all your past personal and professional accomplishments. No success is too small to be noted. Include successes in grade school, high school, college, sports, work, volunteer activities (church, school or civic organizations) and professional associations. Once noted, consider what you learned or gained from each of these individual successes. What talent was unearthed? What skill was developed? What relationship enhanced? Finally, honestly ask yourself if you are utilizing all the tools you have at your disposal. If not, why not?

Remember, success is not magical, it's methodical. Yesterday's successes provide the foundation for confidence today which serves as the springboard for tomorrow's personal and professional growth.

Most of us admit to being hesitant when it comes to getting too close to our employees, our team members, our followers. But, let's face the truth. If a person, in this case a mentor, has not taken the time to really get to know the person and his or her individual needs, how can that person ever hope to offer wise counsel? Even if they could offer wise counsel to someone they had spent little one-on-one time with, what motivation would the individual have to believe in and act on the counsel being offered?

Mentoring Skill # 3: Empowering

Simply defined, empowerment is willingly and knowingly granting your official power to others. Simple words, but a challenging concept, right? Not if you have planted your mentoring tap root in fertile soil.

If you have invested both the time and energy in proper coaching and individual counseling, then it's really not that hard to begin to let go of the reins, to begin to empower your followers. However, if you lay awake in bed at nights watching the overhead fan go round and round, it may be that you realize that you have taken some shortcuts with your leadership position.

But, it's never too late! There is still time to develop your skill as both leader and mentor. But, you can't ignore the differences. And you need to start today.