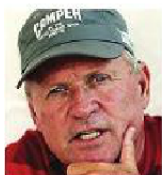




## Leadership



Leadership – a subject deeper, and at times rougher, than the Southern Ocean. Gosh, whole books are written about it! In fact, this is such a vast subject that the books written on it can be counted in volumes. So I was hesitant, reluctant really, to write about it this month. But then I use my column to out-think things, while trying to make sense of complicated topics, to the benefit, hopefully, of both you (the reader) and me!

Forget politicians – few, if any, are leaders. Politics is a toxic culture of getting in power, then staying in power, by taking credit for others' work, spinning situations for personal advantage, shifting blame, taking all credit, and moving up the ladder at others' expense. You would not want to be associated with any of those attitudes in your boat, team or company. Sadly there are people who operate that way in the sailing business too – they get exposed eventually; never soon enough, mind you.

The ability to lead, be it a boat, sports team, company, or a family, is something that everyone craves, but too often people think of the leaders only at the very top of the pyramid. Leadership has very little to do with rank, you find leaders all the way down the pyramid. Without them there is no structure and nothing gets done. Anyone who has responsibility and people counting on them is a leader, like it or not.

Think of the revered sergeant in the army, or chief in the navy, they lead as much as their captains do. Leadership ability can come and go within a person, times and situations change, thus leadership style has to change with it.

OK, let's look at leadership from a sporting point of view, in

fact from a yacht racing campaign point of view. Our leaders are the boat captain, the person who co-ordinates the sails, sailing programme, crew and of course the owner/skipper. There are 10 points all good leaders seem to exude:

**Clear thinking** Call it vision, knowing the path needed to be taken to achieve the goals, or just call it insight. Leaders know where they want to go before they charge off. And they can articulate it, sell it really, to the rest of the team in a positive way. Not in a gushy and rah-rah way, but in a way that makes others buy into the vision or path or whatever you want to call it. Yes, leaders need charisma and a wee bit of charm, not through their tweets, Facebook or personal websites, true leaders get it done through one-on-one interaction.

**Loyalty** Leaders are loyal to their 'guys' first and then their 'guys' are loyal to them. Loyalty is not given, you get it the old-fashioned way – you earn it. The test of loyalty is when you know 'we have got each others' backs'.

**A bit of mongrel** This is where leaders stay true to their convictions, their vision. It's hard because there are pressures and easier paths to take. And, frankly, a long campaign can wear you down to the point the mongrel wants to lie down and go to sleep. It's bloody hard to charge into the office each day full of salt and vinegar, day after day, week after week, month after month. Progress is always slower than you want, but staying true to those convictions will help keep the spring in your step.

**Concept vs detail** A careful balance is needed here. Leaders can't afford to just be philosophers, but micro-managing is perhaps even more deadly. You need balance and understanding of both. Leaders at the pointy end tend to lean, at least slightly, towards

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The late Sir Peter Blake grinding on the Maxi *Condor* (left) and (above) after winning the America's Cup in 1995 was widely admired as a strong but fair leader afloat and ashore. One of his claims was always that he could and would do any job onboard, which especially endeared him to his round-the-world crewmates

the concept stage; the leaders who make it all happen tend to be more adept with detail. All good leaders deal with reality. Not how they wish it was, but how it really is.

**Leave the jersey in a better place** Each day when a first-rate leader takes off his uniform and hangs it up (leaders don't drop their clothing on the floor) it's while knowing your campaign (or company) is in a better place or will be because of your efforts today. Now some less worthy pretenders would think 'am I in a better position after today?' – those sorry souls should go into politics and not waste anyone's time make-believing to be leaders. Do you get the feeling those kind of people really annoy me!?!

**Make the decision** If you have all the information you're going to get, there is no point putting off a decision. Tough calls don't get easier with time, in fact procrastinating on making the decision becomes a bigger play on your mind than the decision itself. Once the facts are in, get together with your people and make a call. Then move on.

**Everyone gets to take out the rubbish** That means no one is above getting their hands dirty with hard labour if it needs doing. Leaders are not 'above' getting stuck in when it's all hands to the pumps. And the same for rules, they apply to everyone, if the policy is clean up after yourself, then you do, don't leave it for someone else to do.

**Don't just say what, say why** Leaders don't just give orders, they take the time to teach. People will respect, trust and buy into the programme, and you, when you explain 'why'. Everyone will be better for it.

**The seven Cs of leadership** (Really they come from coaching but apply to leadership just the same). Calm, Communication, Compassion, Confidence, Composure, Certainty and Creativity.

**Ownership** Leaders instil the feeling of 'ownership' in each and every person. You don't work for me, we work together as co-owners in this. That will provide for an environment that makes people want to excel for the cause. They are not limited to one aspect, but as an 'owner' see the bigger picture of everyone's contribution.

I reckon the best leaders, the really exceptional leaders, are the ones you never see. They just make it happen. Nowhere have I said leaders need to be seen to be leading. That is an ego thing, wanting others to know you're in charge. That is from the 'it's a me, me world' and is counterproductive to many of the attributes you will require to be a true leader.

There, in just a little over 1,000 words, I have sorted out the qualities required to be a leader! My! My! If it was that easy, I might be tempted to sort out the America's Cup next time... Nah, I just thought of a kazillion other leadership principles I left out. Maybe I will stick to the Kiss principle (Keep It Simple, Stupid) and just leave it here for this month... □

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