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# A New Way of Thinking about 'Thought Leadership'

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## A New Way of Thinking about ‘Thought Leadership’

Traditionally, we have seen ‘thought leadership’ as a label for leaders who have lots of innovative ideas. We have always considered thought leaders as those who have the great ideas in the organization and then others go out and implement those great ideas. Today, I was considering that maybe we could look at thought leadership in a whole new light. What if the leader was actually able to influence the team to use their own thoughts to strive towards better performance and ultimately better business results? If the leader stands as an example of ‘right thinking’ and demonstrates optimism, ethical behavior and positive determination to succeed, is it probable that the team will reflect that kind of leadership in their daily performance? Optimism is contagious and positive thinking goes viral once a leader demonstrates how it works.

At the dawn of the ‘new thought’ era in the late 1800’s, Prentice Mulford, a politician, journalist, poet, lecturer, wrote a book entitled *Thoughts are Things* (Mulford 1989). His premise was that we all have a ‘higher self’ and a ‘lower self’. The lower self is involved with negativism, suffering, complaining, dwelling on the past, worry and doubt. The higher self is concerned with positive viewpoints, belief in a vision, freedom, success and forward motion. As leaders, when we say, ‘To thine own self be true’... we have to decide to which ‘self’, the lower or the higher, do we choose to be true.

As leaders, do we show a positive outlook to our team? Can they count on us to see the glass as half full when we are moving through difficult times? Often we, as leaders, become frustrated with the current financial crisis, our lack of resources or even the idea of a bleak future. Some of us fear for our financial security. Is this ‘self’ reflected in our faces when our team looks to us for leadership? Are we leading them towards the right kind of thinking that can bring success? As another ‘new thought’ leader from the early 20th Century said, “A small spark can start a great fire.” (Fox 1932) Maybe it is the look on our face or a sigh under our breath but we, as leaders, must remember that our team is always watching. If we hesitate, they will hesitate. If we doubt, they will doubt. If we fear, they will fear. Our thoughts and the expressions of our thoughts spread like wildfire throughout our team. Have you ever considered that YOU lead the thoughts of your team? You are the leader and the team will reflect your attitudes and your way of thinking.

If you want to be a thought leader, ask yourself:

1. **Do I make it a habit to read positive business literature and to listen to positive thinkers?** “It is the food that you furnish to your mind that determines the whole character of your life” (Fox 1932). If we read positive journalist, writers and bloggers and other thought leaders, we are more likely to consciously choose to lead from our higher self every day.
2. **Am I conscious, from the beginning of the day until the last employee leaves for home, of my role as thought leader?** Thought Leadership is a state of consciousness whereby we are aware of our responsibility to look for the positive and lead our people ethically and with an optimistic viewpoint. We have to choose to lead from the ‘higher self’ all day long.
3. **Do I self-reflect during the day?** Getting caught up in the day-to-day stresses of the business world is something that we all do. Taking a few moments, throughout the day, to reflect on our own attitude and our own way of thinking can do wonders for the engagement and dedication of our team.



Another ‘new thought’ writer, Leo Buscaglia wrote, “Don’t spend precious time asking ‘Why isn’t the world a better place?’ It will only be time wasted. The question to ask is ‘How can I make it better?’ To that there is an answer.” (Leo Buscaglia) It’s always easy to criticize our leaders or complain about the clients or even whine about the current financial conditions but, if a leader wants to keep the team on the right track, they must always bring the team back to the question, ‘What can we do to make this situation better?’ That question can redirect the team back to the positive path that leads to top performance. This is what a ‘thought leader’ really does. They lead top performance by being certain that their team is on the right path. A conscious leader takes the responsibility for guiding and leading the thoughts of their team in a positive direction.

“Ability is what you’re capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it” (Holtz, date unknown). Guide your team through conscious thought leadership so they can ‘do it’ well every day.

### **Sources**

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