

Myths We Tell Ourselves About Leadership

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Purpose: To change the way we think about leadership

- We are taught things about leadership that just aren't true
- They are appealing and widespread
- The truth is often radically different than these myths

Myth #1: Leaders are in control and tell people what to do

- Command and control model - often seen as the default
- Appealing because as leaders making unilateral decisions seems strong and powerful
- Power and control is a universal desire for most of us.

Big Truth: Great leaders learn to give up control.

- Leadership is about influence, not control
- Leaders' goal should be to grow their circle of influence. Control only own behavior.

Myth #2: Only the boss can be the leader. Great leaders are born with leadership charisma.

- Appealing because we like to revere our leaders; put on pedestal; unrealistic expectations.
 - When they inevitably fail, we can blame them and avoid responsibility ourselves

Big Truth: Anyone can be a great leader regardless of position or personality.

- Anyone can lead if they choose to serve the needs of others and develop trusting relationships

Myth #3: Credentials make a leader

- Appealing because credentials are objective
 - It promises a path to leadership without having to deal with people.

Big Truth: Character makes a leader (credentials just get you in the door)

- Professionalism; paying attention to people, able to develop trusting relationships, integrity, serving others over self.

Myth #4: Focus on results first

- Appealing because there is some truth to it. We need to pay attention to results.

Big Truth: Focus on the people first, and the results will follow

- Great leaders are not distracted by circumstances
- Results are short-term. Relationships are long-term
 - Accountability: Strive for environment that is a learning one, not one full of anxiety

Myth #5: The employees serve the needs of the leader

- Appealing because that is often what we hire them to do through delegation, etc. It seems so obvious.
- **Big Truth: Great leaders serve the needs of their employees**
 - Paradox I've observed: Authority figures who serve the needs of others ("For You" attitude) get more back from their employees than **they give**.