

Leadership - What Will Happen if Nothing Changes? - By Gregg Thompson

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Many of us who lead organizations go through a very similar routine this time of the year. We start by admonishing ourselves for the mistakes of the past year -the projects left undone and the opportunities not seized. We grit our teeth, clean off our desks, start a fresh notebook and resolve to make significant changes in the way we will work in the coming year. Year after year, the same resolutions are made:

1 I've just got to get organized. ('If I can just create a better way of dealing with this relentless stream of email, improve my scheduling and sort out this mess of papers in my briefcase, I'll be able to spend more time doing the really important leadership stuff.')

2 This year, I will set priorities. ('I've got to stop doing a bunch of things, no matter how cool and interesting, and discipline myself to do only the strategic stuff.')

3 I promise to delegate more. ('If I can only get others to do the things I don't want to do and to work as hard and smart as me, I'll be free to do the high value-added stuff.')

I have news for you (and me). While these are worthy goals, the truth is we will all still be at the same spot next year, fussing about the way we are organizing, prioritizing and delegating. But what would happen if we were determined to make a real change in the way we lead our organizations this year? Perhaps we should ask ourselves the more compelling question... what will happen in our organization this year if nothing changes in the way we lead?

Here are seven leadership resolutions you might consider that will make a real difference in your organization in the coming year. Which ones will provide the biggest payoffs? Do all seven, and I promise that you will have the most rewarding year of your leadership career!

1. Craft A Big, Bold, Breath-Taking Story And Tell It Every Day

What is the most exciting, rewarding, and scariest future you can imagine? What great battles will be won, treasures found and people freed. Paint the story in full color. What does the future look like? How are we going to get there? How is tomorrow going to be much better than today? People want to be part of an important story. Tell it to them and help them find their own starring role.

2. Multiply The Strength Of Your Leadership Connections

Consider for a moment the 8-10 individuals with whom you share management and leadership responsibilities. How much more effective would your leadership team become if you dramatically strengthened your personal connection with every one of these people? You have probably created a mutually acceptable status quo with these individuals so change will not be easy. Are there some difficult conversations that you need to have? Try this: honor their uniqueness, share more of yourself, learn about them, ask how you can serve them. Be careful, this is very potent.

3. Act With Exceptional Compassion And Kindness

You are not the only one feeling a bit beaten up these days. The members of your organization are faced with many of the same challenges that you face...imperfect products, unpredictable markets, insatiable customers, disappointing staff performance. Seek out ways to show your humanity every day. Treat everyone in the organization with dignity and respect, especially those who are struggling. They will walk through walls for you, but do not do it for that reason. Do it because it is the right thing to do. We spend much of our waking lives inside organizations and you have the power to make these places where the human spirit can thrive or die. Use this power well.

4. Tell The Absolute Truth Stop Spinning, Sugar-Coating And Avoiding.

You'll be amazed at how many people start listening to you. Everyone wants to improve the communication throughout their organization but what about simply setting a new standard for honesty... starting with you. How much more effective would your organization be if the half-truths, positioning, sacred elephants and face-saving were eradicated? The tough part is that you cannot make this happen by mandating it. You must go first. You must model it.

5. Hold Everyone Accountable Accountability Is A Very Good Thing.

It is not tyranny. The caring leader insists that people do what they say they will do. When you hold people accountable, you are saying that their work is important. You are saying that they are important. Every time you let a deadline slip or a deliverable go incomplete, you are discounting the person whose job it is to deliver on these commitments. Make it a habit to ensure that every piece of work is accompanied by a personal commitment. Measure. Give feedback. Initiate consequences. Celebrate being part of an organization that keeps its promises.

6. Confront Underperformance With A Twist

You know in your heart-of-hearts who is under-performing in your organization. Make a list. Commit to seeing that this performance changes early this year. Now here's the tough part. Before you take any action, ask yourself these questions - 'What is my part in this situation? How have my actions or lack thereof contributed to this situation? What do I need to do differently?' Approach the individuals in question and describe your responsibilities and personal commitments to change. Then, and only then, it's their turn. You may need to do nothing else.

7. Be Distinctively You What would you get if you could put all of the leadership qualities of Bill Gates, Gandhi, Mother Theresa, George Washington, Jack Welch and Winston Churchill into one individual? Probably a bland, non-descript person indistinguishable in the crowd. These men and women made a difference because they had the courage to be themselves. Have you forgotten who you really are? What excites you these days? What are your passions? Your obsessions? Where do you want to make your mark? When you are at your best, what are you doing? Maybe it's time to figure out what is most important to you, tell everyone around you, and let this fuel your leadership.

Why not make this your best year ever as a leader. What will happen if nothing really changes?

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