

Inspirational Leaders and Their Qualities
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Introduction

Throughout the world, leaders shape the way we operate in society, in business, in spirituality, and more. Leaders influence our future and mold our personalities for us to strive to be just like our leaders. But the label “leader” is simply that, a label. Anyone can be categorized as a leader. What makes a leader a true leader is not their title, but the characteristics they portray and their actions that make them a successful leader. Leadership requires consistency and repetition of those unique actions to be a successful leader. For example, if a manager was invited to a seminar and was given a 2-hour lecture on what makes a person a successful leader, then at the end of the seminar, each member is given a certificate in leadership. In some eyes, that certificate proves that the manager has become a leader. The big issue with this is that the certificate does not define the actions that the manager has taken to achieve leadership, but instead establishes a stamp that the manager has only been given facts about leadership and how to achieve the role of being a leader. Essentially, leadership takes action, takes time, takes hard work, and takes consistency. Throughout life, everyone encounters leaders. Some may actually portray leadership qualities, while others simply have the title with no action to back up their role. Personally, I have encountered many people with the title “leader” that actually showed less qualities of true leadership than the percentage of sugar in a Coke Zero. However, there are three individuals that immediately come to mind when I think of a true leader. Tim Cook, Apple’s CEO, Barry Johnson, owner of New York Pizza in Pascagoula, MS and former culinary arts instructor for Pascagoula High School, and Sylvia Relue, a front desk operations manager for Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, have proven leadership qualities throughout my career path. These individuals hold values that create true leadership qualities beyond their title.

Tim Cook



It is no surprise that one of the largest tech companies is led by one of my personal favorite leaders. Tim Cook has led Apple to becoming a leader in the tech industry since August of 2011. Beyond his contributions to leading a successful company, he has also invested countless amounts of efforts to grow and develop his employees. Tim follows a very strict guideline in saying, “Take care of your employees, and your employees will take care of you.” Tim goes above and beyond to ensure that his employees are well equipped to perform any role within Apple. There is also a huge push to challenge and grow each and every employee. There is never a dull moment at Apple, and if you find yourself feeling burnt out within the role, Tim has created opportunities to resolve this by dissecting an employee’s goals and skills to transition them into another role within the company, if desired. There is consistency in the efforts Tim holds to maintain a healthy work environment, and I can say personally that these efforts have not only benefitted the company but have benefitted me as an employee. Through his efforts, I feel motivated and challenged every day I come to work. I am able to set goals with finish lines that are not impossible to cross, and I am given every resource necessary to ensure my goals can be met. There is also an aura of feeling like you are part of a family, despite the company employing around 150,000. Tim’s efforts have also led to creating leaders similar to him in other positions within the company. You can think of it like a tree of leaders, and each leader is trained and encouraged to promote leadership in everyone under that respective leader. This follows the motto that leaders create other leaders. Furthermore, by investing in the success and future of employees of Apple, Tim

has created a work environment that is inviting, exciting, and desired. By doing so, he has led his company to become a leader in the tech industry.

Barry Johnson



It may sound cliché to define a teacher as a leader as they are trained to be a leader during their teaching education and career; however, as stated above, a leader must show proof of their leadership qualities to become a true leader. One of the most influential leaders I have encountered was discovered at Pascagoula High School in the Culinary Arts Program. Barry Johnson was my instructor for culinary arts for two years before transitioning to becoming the Owner of New York Pizza in Pascagoula, MS. Barry demonstrated true leadership qualities by truly investing time, energy, money, and more into his students. Barry believed that textbook work was not the way to learn how to cook, and took this belief into practice by cutting out the textbook from his lesson plans as much as he could and instead creating hands-on lessons. Barry demonstrated different techniques within the kitchen, such as how to cut with a knife, how to put out a fire through real-life demonstrations, and how to prepare certain foods. Apart from this, he also believed in training us students on not only how to cook, but how to work collaboratively within a kitchen environment. Through his beliefs, we were able to get real-world experience in everything involving culinary work. In order to fully invest his time into teaching, he offered an open-door policy for students to come in and be given one-on-one training on any question or issue the student may have. For example, if a student had particular questions on how to properly grill a piece of meat, Barry would take the student into the kitchen, demonstrate exactly how to grill the meat, then instruct the student to actually grill the meat in front of him, while giving tips and feedback during the process. He would then require the student to teach what was instructed for the rest of the class the next day. This promoted leadership in every aspect. Unfortunately, circumstances arose that led Barry to not have the tools and resources required to teach his students in the effective ways he had been doing so for many years. Because of this, Barry transitioned into a different position as Owner of New York Pizza. Through his transition, Barry continued to promote his leadership qualities by offering extended training on culinary skills for those interested in working with Barry at New York Pizza. I was grateful for this opportunity and became employed at the pizza shop. Barry trained me on everything from customer service to cooking skills to restaurant operations. Through Barry's consistent push for success in his students, I was able to apply my knowledge of what Barry taught me to other career options and my future pathway in the computer science industry. Without Barry's leadership, I would not be as prepared and as knowledgeable as I am today.

Sylvia Relue

In the hospitality industry, you are met with all types of individuals. The goal is to provide exceptional service to all types of guests at all times. Sylvia Relue, a hotel operations manager for Beau Rivage Resort Casino, provided this service every day. Sylvia worked for the Beau Rivage for 50 years. It's no surprise that during those 50 years, a majority of them were spent as an operations manager. She portrayed exceptional leadership qualities that led to increased productivity at the front desk for years. I joined Sylvia at the desk in February of 2017

and worked alongside her till February of 2019. During my time working with Sylvia, it became clear why she held her position for so long. Sylvia had a niche for ensuring the operation of the hotel were maintained at all times. Sylvia was very stern and strict when it came to the policies and procedures of the company, and some employees took her strictness as ill-mannered.

However, I saw past this as I understood why Sylvia was very strict to her guidelines and the policies. Maintaining a hotel is not easy, and the slightest mistake can cause a domino effect of issues. Sylvia understood this and ensured that minimal mistakes occurred at all times by consistent training and meetings with the team. Sylvia believed that the number one way to eliminate mistakes is by continuing education and training. For example, if a particular issue

became apparent many times in a period of time, Sylvia would setup a meeting to discuss the issues and how to eliminate it from occurring furthermore. Though Sylvia was strict with policies, she held an employees to visit her with while creating an inviting atmosphere. Like Tim Cook, she held true to the care of your employees, you



Sylvia ensured that each everything they needed to be this, she also was very

innovative and consistently created new tools and provided new resources to simplify the job and increase productivity. I also felt very encouraged to step outside my comfort zone and achieve tasks I would normally never think I could achieve. Sylvia believed that leaders accomplish big things, while followers simply get dragged behind. Because of this, she shared her knowledge with the team at all times in hopes to create leaders alongside her, leaders who can pull a team of individuals to a any goal that is set. I felt confident in my path to leadership after experiencing Sylvia's true leadership qualities and taking action with what she taught me throughout my time at the Beau Rivage.

Conclusion

As explained, leadership is not simply a title, but a quality and a practice that is held by individuals. Leaders have the potential to do amazing things and shape the future of success for a group of individuals. Whether it be leading a Fortune 500 company, operating one of the largest hotels in Mississippi, or simply running a small pizza restaurant, true leadership is needed everywhere and in any industry. Falling short of true leaders will most definitely lead to decreased productivity, decreased profits, and decreased satisfaction within the workplace. Though leadership can seem daunting at times, through the right practice and the right training, anyone can become a leader. Anyone holds the potential to become a leader and be successful in doing so. The key takeaways to becoming a leader is to lead by example, show compassion and empathy, provide training and guidance to uplift individuals, and stand firm in the goals and policies set forth, among others. These qualities, and more, are what make Tim, Barry, and Sylvia all amazing leaders. In my option, if an individual strives to become a leader and has a true passion for leadership, they will typically find the path to success in leadership. It takes dedication to the practice to become a great leader.