Developing Your Leadership Toolbox

Customer demands are intense, the need for continuous innovation is vital, and our national culture is changing. In that context, leading is more challenging than ever. Compared to my 25-year career of leading companies – a span that ended about ten years ago – directing and guiding organizations is now more demanding than in previous eras. However, leadership is vital to organizational success.

Upon beginning my career in academia, I was surprised at the practical applicability of many business theories, especially those related to leadership. Ironically, the term “theory” is typically associated with research or high-level thinking that may not apply to everyday life. But trust me, recently developed leadership theories are relevant and applicable, and knowledge of these theories will help guide you down the path of leadership development – a continuous journey.

My father was a car mechanic. Dad had a box of tools, to which he continuously added. Did Dad use every tool in his toolbox every day? No. Yet, they were there when he needed them. Likewise, the goal of this session is to add relevant leadership concepts and theories to your toolbox. Awareness of these relevant leadership concepts and theories will enhance your ability to assess situations and determine the most effective approach, grow as a leader, and facilitate organization success.

Richard Barton, former Pres. and CEO of Expedia, to the question, “How do you define leadership?”

I’ll tell you what’s not. It’s not management. I think a lot of people – especially in large companies - get confused. You have all these people with titles that have some kind of “manager” in it, and people talking about “management”. I hate the word management. Management is passive. Management is minding the store. Management is something that you have to do, that you don’t necessarily enjoy doing. Leadership to me means leaning forward, looking ahead, trying to improve, being fired up about what you’re doing and being able to communicate that, verbally and non-verbally to those around you...Leaders don’t lean back, leaders lean forward.