



Leadership 101?

By Camilo Cruz, Ph.D.

At a recent seminar, I commented on what I consider to be one of the great failures of our corporate world. Companies have produced a great number of managers but very few leaders. Many of these companies are now paying the price for that mistake. A lack of long-term vision, total absence of accountability, unethical behavior, and betrayal of public trust are just some of the symptoms of this absence of true leadership. The failure to develop leadership hasn't been limited to the corporate arena. These same shortcomings have been observed in government, sports, politics, the Church, and many other areas where the need for vision, values, and character is paramount.

Writer John C. Maxwell defines leadership as "our ability to influence others." The great philosopher Lao-Tse expressed the "ability to influence" in a well-known proverb: "When the great leader's job is done, his people say, 'we did it ourselves.'" Lao-Tse understood that the true role of a leader should be to facilitate the success of his or her team. The truth is that leaders know how to influence the thoughts and actions of other people towards achieving the goals of the organization.

After almost a decade of working with businesses of all sizes throughout the United States and Latin America, and having interacted with a number of leaders, pseudo-leaders, wannabe leaders, and managers, I have found that while good leaders inspire their people to have confidence in them, great leaders inspire them to have confidence in themselves. They know how to bring out the best in people by empowering

them, and helping them realize their full potential.

The really important issue isn't having a clear vision of what you want to accomplish, but rather having your team—be it your company, family, community, or country—share in that vision and be prepared to do everything necessary to have it become a reality. In this era of leadership management, the new leader is, as Tom Peters puts it, a "hero finder" and a "nurturer of champions." Leaders need to learn how to bring out the very best in people. They need to guide and support them to achieve their very best.

Without a doubt, the common denominator of all great achievements throughout history has been the existence of a leader.

**"People don't want
to be managed. They want
to be led. Who ever heard
of a world manager?
World leaders, yes."**

(John C. Maxwell)

In all great endeavors of humanity, there has been a leader who, armed with vision, discipline, persistence, and enthusiasm, led the people towards the accomplishment of what were thought to be impossible dreams.

We have all heard the great truism, "Leaders are not born, they are made," but how are they made? I suspect that here lies the root of the problem. Perhaps the greatest dilemma, which we are just now beginning to unravel, is that while leadership is something that surely must be learned, it is not something that can be taught, forced, or imposed. That's why I have my doubts about courses and workshops advertised as "Introduction to Leadership" or "Leadership

101." That is because I am completely convinced that leaders learn to lead by leading.

Unfortunately, some companies today remind me of a humorous situation that I witnessed a few years ago in a convention center where I was scheduled to lead a seminar. A young manager, who had become separated from his group, was running like a madman from one floor to another, shouting, "Where is my group? I'm their leader."

In my book, *"La Arquitectura del Éxito"* (The Architecture of Success), I define leadership as, "accepting 100 percent of the responsibility for our success." Sadly, many businesses today face a serious problem because their managers are not willing to accept 100 percent of the responsibility for the success or failure of their strategies, tactics, processes, and other aspects that affect performance and productivity in a company.

Some time ago, Peter Drucker said, "Every organization should be willing to reinvent itself," and this is nowhere more relevant than when referring to the role of business leaders at the core of their organizations.

Today more than ever, it is essential to remember that the success of a company is simply a reflection of the commitment, the degree of motivation, and the leadership of its people. Now is the time to establish firmly the following ideas within our corporate culture: it is impossible to have a great company with mediocre people; leadership is one of those fundamental elements that shouldn't be reserved for a few select executives, but should be part of the *modus operandi* of every person in the organization. ■

Dr. Camilo Cruz, author and entrepreneur, is the founder and president of www.elxito.com, the first Spanish-language site dedicated to personal development, professional excellence, and leadership. Dr. Cruz has written 15 books, and he presents regular workshops on staff development and peak performance.