

Leadership: Lead by Example

In a world of giving speeches about management, there is one quite lovely quote that is so over-used that I find it nauseating that anybody would ever use it again. And so, I'm about to use it again.

It is a Ghandi line, and it says, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." If you've got a giant campaign going on relative to improving quality and everything from tying your shoes to the way your office looks, or what have you—even though I'm hardly a neat freak myself—has got to echo and/or magnify the "policy message" you are trying to sell. If you look scared of your shadow and you're trying to sell innovation, forget about it.

There's another phrase that is not so elegant as Mr. Ghandi's, but I love it. It comes from a consultant, and I don't even remember what his name is anymore, but his point is—and, boy, is this true—he says, "It's always show time.* A manager is leading people. You lead by example." And what that means is, 24/7, or at least the 18/6 that many people are at work, you must, in fact, understand that you're putting on a show.

I mean, there's substance there, etc., etc., etc. But fundamentally people are all—to go back to the old Cold War analogy—people are all Kremlin-ologists. They dissect what you're wearing and who you're talking to and the way you present yourself and the kinds of questions you ask, and so on.

Years ago, Franklin Delano Roosevelt famously said, "The President must be the nation's number one actor." Well, Mr. Roosevelt is clearly right. But the same thing is true for a 26-year-old first-line supervisor working with eight or ten men and women on a job. It is ... if you're a leader, if you're a boss, it is *always* show time.

* David D'Alessandro, *Career Warfare*, Rule 6.