



MITCHELL PHOENIX

Building Core Business Strength

Leadership – We Know It When We Se It (Press Release 18 May'09)

Amid the public outcry over MP's expenses and their discontent at the conduct of the Speaker, those seeking lessons on leadership might be forgiven for looking anywhere other than the Houses of Westminster at the moment.

And yet the Speaker can furnish us with some useful insights into what is required of leaders. His recent behaviour in firstly being unwilling to see the importance of the brewing scandal over MPs' expenses, and then in savaging members of his own party when they questioned his judgement on the issue has dissipated his authority. The result of this has been a loss of confidence in the Speaker among MPs and calls for his resignation.

We might justifiably ask ourselves how this has happened – after all, it seems that he has done no more than misjudge the public mood and respond cantankerously to some hostile questioning. But in fact, he has not offered the leadership his position demands.

In business a position of authority is bestowed on a manager by those above him or her in the hierarchy. This authority is accompanied by a set of responsibilities and a level of trust. Should the manager then break this trust, it will not be long before he or she loses the job.

In order to successfully wield the power which accompanies a position of authority, a manager also needs the respect of the people below him or her in the hierarchy. If this respect is lost, the manager's ability to exercise the power of their position is greatly reduced.

While the Speaker's office is more complicated than that of a hypothetical business manager, the lesson for business people is that it is not enough simply to occupy the position of authority and wield the accompanying power.

Kevin Yates, Managing Director of Mitchell Phoenix, explains, "leadership is not simply an idea, nor is it expedient - something we can believe in one day and not the next. People will see straight through that. It has to be visible, applied, and strong enough to gain the respect of the people you lead."

In fact, argues Yates, after it has been bestowed one then has to prove one is worthy, and to do this, one has to display the fundamental qualities of leadership: a sense of purpose about what it is one wishes to achieve, decisiveness in fulfilling that purpose, the ability to mobilise others in adversity, and a character which commands respect.

To find out more about how to develop your leadership capabilities, call Mitchell Phoenix on +44 (0) 20 8334 8042.

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