



*If you were stripped of your title,
would your employees still follow you?*

I stumbled across this powerful question on a great website www.leadershipnow.com. I was researching information to use with leaders who are thinking about the impact their titles have on employees. Many leaders assume employees follow them because of the position they hold. Some believe the politics of leadership and the power to reward and punish also affect how employees perceive and respond to them. There is an element of truth to this, however there is increasing evidence that effective leadership is about much more than a title.

As a leader it is important to understand why people choose to follow you. It is equally important to understand why they won't. It is not a given that your title and the power that comes with it automatically motivates someone to follow your lead.

People decide whether to follow a leader based on a number of factors. The leader-follower relationship is far more complex than it appears on the surface. It is important to understand there is a relationship between how people perceive and feel about leaders and their willingness to follow. For example when I interview a leader's employees they tell me they will comply with title and power but prefer to, and are more willing to, follow leaders who consistently demonstrate an interesting combination of what I refer to as confidence, competence, and courage.

Confidence:

Leaders who demonstrate self confidence exude a sense of focus and strength that inspires confidence in those around them. When people feel confident together they can accomplish great things.

Competence

People like leaders who know their stuff. They want technically competent leaders who have the ability to teach the skills and knowledge needed to be effective in the workplace. In addition, they want leaders who are competent team builders, communicators and managers of change.

Courage:

Like confidence, leaders who demonstrate personal courage inspire others to be courageous too. The world of work is full of situations that require people to be strong and calm in the face of many things. Courageous leadership on everyone's part helps people thrive in the midst of these moments. Courageous leaders stand for what is right and ethical. Courageous leaders speak truth about the joy and challenge of the leader-employee dynamic. Courage often contributes to a culture that allows people to feel open and safe to challenge and support one another at work.

Will people follow you because of your title? They sure will and you will get good work from them. However if combining your title with confidence, competence and courage inspires people to give you great work why not leverage your title with these qualities and characteristics? Take time to ponder the question the answers might move you to a new level of leadership.