



Anatomy of a Leader

A journey through the human anatomy can help Y professionals be the best they can be.

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“LEADER” is a noun meaning one who leads, guides or acts as principal chief, master, director, captain. However, a true leader is a coach who carries followers along, strengthening them in the process. A nurturing spirit, mind and body are at the core of the Y philosophy, and these qualities can help prepare people to become effective leaders. Like the human body, a leader must use their assets to the best of their ability and optimize the preparation and care of all systems for ultimate success. Travel with me through the human body, and together we will map the course to successful leadership.

Heart

Having the heart of a leader means developing an appreciation for who you are and recognizing your own strengths, qualifications and weaknesses. Many people frequently compare themselves to others without realizing the value of their personal potential. They envy others who appear more successful without realizing their own worth and achievements. This negative comparison is damaging and counterproductive.

Successful people encounter disappointment and failure more often than one would think. The difference is the

leader's response to these events. The challenge is to remain optimistic and confident. At the heart of confidence is determination and discipline. Leaders must have a belief in themselves that is more powerful than problems, inconveniences or obstructions they encounter. Having the heart of a leader is to discover self-reliance, to acquire the stamina to persevere and to develop the vital qualities necessary for success.

Spine

Everyone has had painful or unpleasant experiences. Some individuals are destroyed by these experiences, while others are able to not only survive intact, but also discover their "backbone." If you don't have one, grow a spine today! Stand up for your convictions and be willing to take risks. No risk, no reward.

When John McLean, an Australian triathlete, became paralyzed from a cycling accident, he didn't give up his life's

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dreams and ambitions. His first attempt to be the first physically challenged athlete to complete the World Triathlon Championships in Hawaii met with failure. He missed the bike cutoff and was unable to complete the event. He returned the following year, more determined than ever, and became the first physically challenged athlete to complete the event (swim 2.4 miles, bike 112 miles and run 26.2 miles in less than 17 hours). Since that time, McLean has gone on to swim the English Channel and hopes to climb Mt. Everest.

Muscle

Physical fitness is an essential element for a leader. Energy levels will be significantly enhanced if one maintains a healthy body. Without a strong body, the mind is severely handicapped and unable to reach its full potential. As part of a program for success, the importance of caring for and preserving health cannot be overstated.

However, good leaders also exercise their leadership muscles through effective planning. Setting specific goals makes it easier to understand what you want to achieve. The plan should be stated in a way that leaves no question

about the final outcome. When designing a plan with a definite objective, you are put in charge of the final result. Being precise will give ideas more clarity and direction; they will have greater purpose and meaning. Being precise will also help you to work harder to succeed. Committing to paper exactly what is desired and how to achieve it is a technique that produces positive results. For instance, business leaders can develop programs to enhance their rate of success, and athletes can describe how they will improve their game or devise strategies specific to their next opponent.

Shoulders

Although problems may arise which discourage ambitions, a leader does not sit on the sidelines and hope that someone else will assume authority or resolve the situation. Shouldering responsibility is an essential characteristic of a successful leader. An individual who is conscientious and reliable, and who can excel under pressure while leading by example, is a valuable and sought-after asset. People will be motivated by a fair, but decisive leader who is in command of any situation.

Brain

You have within you the resources to accomplish even those goals that may have been dismissed as unobtainable. There is no doubt the spirit, mind and body are interrelated, that an individual's state of mind determines physical abilities. This remarkable combination can be released through a positive attitude, which leads to success in all areas of life.

Imagine you have a problem that appears to have no logical solution. What type of approach can you use to find a satisfactory result? One way is to allow your subconscious to work for you. Begin to think positively and constructively about the situation. Do not be tempted to settle for makeshift or unsatisfactory alternatives simply because they appear to be quick and easy. The subconscious mind stores every single thing you see, hear or experience, and is amazingly effective at making use of this accumulated knowledge. Make use of this powerful resource, and you just might be surprised at the result.

Eyes

Using the principle of visualization is one way to develop the qualities required for leadership, as well as significantly improve your chances for success. Visualization involves forming vivid pictures in your mind. It is also seeing things happen before they actually do. Once these creative thoughts are established, you can then transform them into

reality. The idea of seeing pictures in your mind may seem to be an unusual way to help yourself achieve success, but in reality you have been doing it all your life. Visualization is the adult version of children using their imagination.

Leadership is particularly effective when it includes the use of creative visualization. As you determine exactly what you want to visualize, be certain of your ultimate intent. It is important to visualize all of the possible results before you decide upon a course of action. Imagine the results you want to make the chosen outcome a reality. Additionally, adding enthusiasm, no matter what you are doing, creates a sense of anticipation, optimism and even fun. Visualization inspired by enthusiasm becomes very powerful and contagious.

Ears

One of the most outstanding qualities of a leader is the ability to listen to what is going on around you and to the people with whom you interact. An especially important aspect of group activity is listening. By being attentive, you can benefit from important information, gain new perspectives and receive encouragement. Listening presents an opportunity to appreciate the knowledge, vision and creativity of other people. It is a skill that is often overlooked, al-

though it contributes to efficient communication. Listening also teaches you to be considerate of others' viewpoints, even if you do not agree with what you hear. Sometimes people are so preoccu-

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pled with their own problems and projects, they forget to enjoy, appreciate or listen to others. Take time to listen. You will be well rewarded.

Feet

The feet are the foundation of the body. When I treat clients for biomechanical issues, I suggest that they would not build a house on a weak foundation, so why choose a shoe with little support? The same is true of a leader. They are grounded in discipline, dedication, honesty and trust. Having commitment means putting one foot in front of the

other and never quitting under any circumstances. The more positive you are, the less inclined you will be to accept the limitations imposed upon you by events, situations, physical conditions or the attitudes of others. There are always several ways to approach a problem or take advantage of an opportunity. Your ability to change your path can be the gateway to success. It is important to consider various possibilities and search for different ways to achieve a desired result. Learn from others' mistakes and capitalize on their wisdom and experience.

The road to success

Among the many roads that lead to success, it may not always be easy to know which to travel, but by optimizing and caring for your spirit, mind and body, you can produce a direct route to the goal of your choosing. Plan wisely, and take the first steps to effective leadership. **FMV**

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