



## Public Sector Reform Column



MAKING BARBADOS WORK BETTER

# LEADERSHIP

**The global environment in which we operate is constantly changing to the point that managers must be able to quickly shift their thinking emphasis to address and grasp emerging issues and opportunities. Managers now have to be strong leaders. Managers have been forced to refocus their techniques and leadership skills to be results oriented and be creative problem solvers.**

### Leadership Characteristics

In earlier times, managers only needed to know the ‘how’ of business processes and act upon them. Today, there is a necessity to know and understand the ‘why’ of business, because the ‘why’ enables the knowledge power to anticipate business opportunities and be proactive. Leadership is not a one-day thing. It is a journey of constant commitment to excellence without a final destination. Leadership demands self-improvement and self-renewal to continue. Leaders make decisions that create the future and above all, successful leaders of today dare to desire. They must dominate the events around them while maintaining an atmosphere of dignity and mutual respect.

### Breaking Paradigms

The ability to look at the world as it is and view something new and improved is a valued leadership trait. Leaders with this quality have been able to create something new by breaking down the barriers caused by existing paradigms that once stifled progress. They have been innovative, creative, flexible, responsible and not afraid to experiment. Many organisations consist of multi-disciplinary teams as a way of doing business. This system may work well until a problem occurs. The teams’ behavioural interaction may change

and they may begin finger-pointing and apportioning blame, instead of finding solutions cooperatively.

For example, the marketing department may look at what is perceived to be a distribution problem. Instead of the unnecessary finger pointing, marketing adopts the customer's perspective and suggests a solution to solve the problem. Ideas and solutions can be found in some of the most unlikely places and leaders should not be too quick to dismiss the less than obvious. Once the idea or solution has been sourced, one should not be afraid to experiment and take risks to invest in ideas that show promise, even if it means trying the idea again and again in different variations.

### **The Big Difference**

The question of the difference between a manager and leader is raised frequently. In a broad sense, managers are administrators who write business plans, set budgets and monitor business. Leaders, on the other hand, get organisations and people to change. Management is a function that is exercised in any business. Leadership is the relationship between the leader and those being led and this relationship can energise an organisation. What is it that makes a manager a good leader? One has to ask why people follow this leader and what does the leader have to do to make organisations and their teams successful. History has shown that people follow a leader either out of fear or for a mix of positive reasons such as hope of success, trust in the leader, excitement about a project or mission, or the opportunity to stretch oneself to the limit. Leaders create a vision which inspires people with an ideal of what can be achieved. They make people feel they are the best and can achieve whatever they imagine.

### **Summary**

Organisations need good management and great leaders. They need efficient functions and energising relationships. Bureaucracies tend to be over managed and under led, resulting in bored, unmotivated employees. New businesses are often intensely led and under managed, so that enthusiasm leads to unplanned problems, overspending and missed deadlines. There are many different ways to exercise the management function and people are willing to follow different leadership styles. Although there are many

good examples of management and leadership, there is no one best way. We need to observe what the successful organisations have done and design our own management functions by involving team members. Leaders and potential leaders need to develop ways of inspiring people to follow and support them. They need to develop the concept of breaking paradigms, by looking at the situation and creating a vision of how that situation can be improved for the future.

By Harriet Brathwaite, Communications Officer, The Office of Public Sector Reform