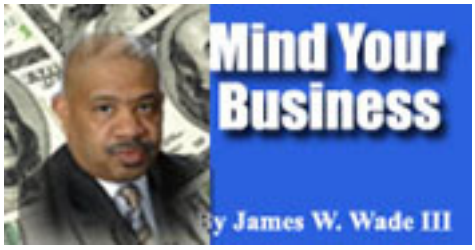

Mind Your Business

**Distinguishing good and bad leaders**

Okay, in case you have not been following me on Twitter or Facebook, I am all into the ABC series “Scandal,” starring Kerry Washington (Olivia Pope) and Columbus Short, so much that I live for Thursday evening’s at 10 p.m. now.

Olivia’s strength makes her a great leader but what really makes her a powerful leader is her team. They all have skills she relies on to fix whatever problems arise.

So, I ask, how many times have you been fascinated by a good story or book? Think about this for a minute because it may be more often than you think. How many times have you stayed up late reading a novel that you couldn’t just had to finish before you went to bed?

There’s no doubt that stories can change the way we think, act, and feel. Leaders, especially, can use the power of a good story to influence and motivate their teams to new heights. Stories can inspire everything from understanding to action. They can create legends that an entire workplace culture can build upon and they have the power to break down barriers and turn a bad situation into a good one. Stories can capture our imaginations and make things real in a way that cold, hard facts can’t.

Make no mistake. Stories can be very, very powerful leadership tools. Great leaders know this and many top CEOs today use stories to illustrate points and sell their ideas. Leadership is a quality that not everyone has and, sometimes in life, people have to see the difference.

It's clear to see many are motivated by money, no by lies. I have often tweeted about the difference when you think people are laughing with you or at you.

Successful businesses need good leaders and there are many names that probably will spring to your mind of those who have led businesses to great success.

Being a strong leader is being honest and fair and not trying to make it all about you. Leaders must have the ability to inspire and motivate others**.** Leaders need to inspire and motivate their employees to achieve the business objectives, as well as inspire their suppliers, customers, and everyone they deal with around their business vision.

Putting down the person who works for you is not cute or funny. You have to remember, there are always two sides to a story. Ideas are a source that everyone can benefit from. Take the advice from the people who do the job and listen to what they consider are the ongoing problems.

In a meeting this week, the people in charge wanted to change the structure for their benefit and what they felt was best. The idea quickly drew much criticism from the workers around the table and I applauded the great leaders for listening and not being dogmatic and shutting everybody out.

After hearing the views of the people around the table, they changed their mind. Now I am saying this because, to me, that's leadership. It was clear that the table stood united about how they felt and thus it was changed and the leaders compromised.

With me, personal values and my reputation for integrity and honesty mean a lot. That's the way I was raised. Leaders need a strong sense of personal values and a reputation for integrity and honesty as well as the ability to keep calm and assured whatever is happening around them.

A leader who never gives praise to their staff is probably too proud to show gratitude to the

individual for their own personal selfish reasons. But the one thing that usually happens is they are the ones trying to take all the credit, smiling in your face, and stabbing you in the back all at the same time. Don't you just feel sorry for them?

Leaders need to have specific knowledge and experience of the business they are in, as well as good general business knowledge and experience. They also need to focus on self-development and be prepared to keep developing their knowledge and experience.

Many great leaders have shined because they knew to stay in their lane and knew their boundaries. These leaders respect personal and professional boundaries. In other words, they never expect their followers to do something they would not do themselves.

When I was in various classes at the bank, I could hear them teaching a lot about team work. Whether you are a team of two or 2,000, as a leader, you are also the head cheerleader. Go, team, go only works if you provide the right environment.

Teamwork is always something to consider when striving to become a good leader. This means not only teaching your employees to work together but to become part of the team yourself.

Use others potential. Many times, employee's potential is wasted. A good leader recognizes that his or her employees are more than just employees. They are people too. These people have lives outside of work where they have to make decisions on a daily basis, from how to deal with house payments and car notes to raising children and completing uncountable tasks in everyday lives. Yet, at work, their decision-making skills are not trusted enough to choose what type of toner needs to be ordered for a set of printers.

The point here is that employees need to be trusted to do more. A good leader doesn't manage every single detail. They use others' potential to their benefit. You will find that you have become a better leader for it.

*"Leadership is when you give of yourself for the greater good of others with no expectation of reward. It's that willingness to jump in a ditch with your whole team so that the next time they fall*

*in, everyone understands the best and easiest way to get out. As I deal mostly with military families who need guidance towards a sustainable future, leadership is absolutely concerned with getting down in the trenches to do the dirty work."***--**Roxanne Reed, executive director of the Military Spouse Foundation .

Don Graham was a great leader and knew what it took to motivate us to accomplish whatever we had to do. But Graham also knew he had a great team and he could depend on us to get the job done.

If you take a moment and think, I am sure you will come across a leader who inspired you and made you feel like your work meant something as oppose to someone who stepped in and messed up every deal because they want to flex their power.

Is it wise to mess up one deal for a crazy price or work with the company and get many deals to make more money? Trust is at the core of respecting any leader. Employees rely on their leadership for income and guidance. Vendors rely on leaders for continued business and clients rely on leaders for a product or service. If employees genuinely believe leaders within an organization are honest, they know they can trust that the job at hand will be carried out to the best of that leader's abilities. Employees work harder for a leader whom they trust, respect, and believe in.

Having trust is a key factor in getting the job done. So who are you trusting?

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*Comments and questions are welcome but, because of the volume of mail, personal responses are not always possible. Please note that comments or questions may be used in a future column.*