
ARE THERE LEADERS ON ST HELENA?

Are you called to lead?

In his/her letters to the Independent the 'London Reader' has intimated that St. Helena lacks good leadership. **Catherine Turner** at **Burgh House** asks whether this is really the case.

What is a leader?

A quick scan through the titles listed on Amazon shows that thousands of books and many academic careers have been spawned in the quest to define leadership. Historically it has been thought that leaders are born, either because kingdoms were left to princes or because family estates and business were passed on to the eldest son. Other more democratically-inclined theorists have pointed to examples of people who have become leaders based on merit such as academic qualifications or natural talent. Today neither of these theories is accepted as the whole truth and while definitions of effective leadership vary there are several common threads.

Good leadership is about

- Understanding a goal and how to achieve it;
- Recognising that rarely can this be achieved alone;
- Being able to communicate the vision to others;
- Recognising the talents of others and what motivates them, so that they will want to work with you and all strive to achieve the goal; and
- Rewarding the team and ensure the team effort is recognised by others especially outside the team.

Within the workplace effective leaders generate higher productivity, lower costs, and more opportunities than ineffective leaders. Effective leaders create results, attain goals, and realize vision and other objectives more quickly and at a higher level of quality than ineffective leaders.

Leadership is not only a business phenomenon. I am sure most people can think of an inspiring leader who has nothing whatever to do with business: a politician, an officer in the armed forces, a Scout or Guide leader, a teacher, etc.

So leadership is not solely based on who your ancestors were, the talents you were born with or even academic qualifications but on personal ability, drive, enthusiasm and the ability to work in a team. These are not rare talents but are skills that can be developed through experience, training and learning from watching others who lead.

Why does St Helena need Leaders?

Put simply over the next few years St Helena will have to change to meet the challenges brought about by the airport. What those changes will be is not within the scope of this article but government and its departments, established and new businesses will need to develop to meet the islands changing needs. This means that people with the ability to envisage what is needed and people who can take a vision and make it happen within the required timescales will be needed more than ever. Not just at the top but at all levels of the organization. We all have to be pulling in the same direction or we will not achieve the vision, so good leaders will be needed in every section and every department.



Could it be you?

You do not have to be a CEO, MD, manager or even a supervisor, to be a leader, although to be good at these roles you do need to be a good leader. There is a difference between management and leadership - managers concern themselves with tasks while leaders concern themselves with people. I do not mean to suggest that leaders do not focus on "the task." In fact what makes a great leader great is that they achieve the vision or goal. The difference lies in the leader realizing that the achievement of the task comes about through the goodwill and support of others.

So can you be an effective leader?

Yes you have the potential – you do not know what you can achieve until you try. St Helena may need more good leaders but the good news is that you are already here.

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