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## Learn what all great leaders know...

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Southwest Michigan First

Great leaders know that they are not the smartest person on their team. But, they are smart enough to know their role: they are just the leader. Great leaders know that not only are they just the leader, but to really lead, they must serve the members of their team.

This may seem a bit counter-intuitive to those who view leaders as the lone authoritarian who gives orders and expects everyone to jump. Real leaders know that shared power produces maximum results.

So, how does a great leader share the power of influence? In our experience, great results are produced by great teams that focus on the following:

- High performance teams are well-read. It has been said that those who do not read have no advantage over those who cannot. We could not agree more. It seems 25% of American adults do not read a single book over the course of a year. If your team is to thrive, they must continue their education through active learning.
  - Great teams are high energy. Your team is either Tigger or Eyeore. Let the competition hire the Eyeores. They will suck the life out of a great team and eventually a great company.
  - Relationships are a critical component of teams. As a leader, it is critical that you promote strong interdependent teams that work as a unit. Great teams compete with your competition, not with each other.
  - Great leaders love their teams and treat them with the respect that goes with that. People will put up with long hours, high pressure and tough conditions for a leader who cares about them and they care about. But what is worse is that highly talented people will flee from a company and a leader who does not treat them like family.
  - It is not about the money with great teams. Sure money is important and a great way to keep score. But, great leaders know that high performance teams are driven by their need to be part of something great that is valued externally and

internally, much more than driven by the dollar. If someone tells you it is just about the money for them, run, don't walk. These people are toxic to any organization.

- Succeed or Die Trying! Great teams are driven with every fiber in their bodies to succeed, not just for the reward of success, but because they have committed to their fellow team members that they would.
- Honesty is critical to great teams. Great leaders cannot allow a cancer of mistrust and passive aggressive behavior to invade their teams. Transparent honesty is not only critical to your team's success but to the organization's ability to survive.
- Great leaders actually talk to their teams; they don't lock themselves in the corner office and send emails. Communication throughout the organization is a must. Encourage your team to communicate with you, amongst each other and with your customers. Most importantly, encourage them to listen.
- You must have the moral authority to lead. The headlines are full of people who had great promise only to see their lives and the lives of the people closest to them destroyed by their bad behavior. Great teams require a leader with a very clear moral compass.

So as our economy comes back to life after a very long winter of financial malaise, it will become critical that we prepare to lead in order to compete. And, we must do so with the complete understanding that the only real competitive advantage we have is the quality of commitment of the team that we engage for success.

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