The Key HR Leadership Lessons From Dwight Eisenhower, Abraham Lincoln, And George Washington

Various issues and considerations exist in the HR leadership literature, as the core of the criticism in the literature is that people at all sorts of organisations (corporations, government agencies, and non-profit organisations) tend to be over-managed (and, in some cases, over-administered) and under-led. Reading all the books on HR leadership today will cover the gamut from Shakespeare to Geronimo. Not to say that these authors, leaders, and thinkers do not have anything good to say about leadership. It is just that the plethora of HR leadership literature has sent mixed signals to HR executives in the real world. The only thing we know is that HR managers may be doing things right, but effective HR leaders are doing the right things. If you agree, even slightly, with this concept, then this professional article is designed, developed, and created for you.

HR Leadership Lessons From Washington, Lincoln, And Eisenhower

After WWII, leadership theoretical models stemmed from research based on military leaders and their followers. This was mostly funded by the GI Bill that helped many soldiers pursue academic degrees. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-346, 58 Stat. 284m), known informally as the G.I. Bill, was a law that provided a range of benefits for returning World War II veterans (commonly referred to as G.I.s). The G.I. Bill offered many opportunities for both scholars and military leaders alike. Military and HR leadership may merge today. Military leaders often provide what is called "Top Cover," flying above their followers to ensure their mission is a success. Submarines travel with pilot ships to guide them. This is what today's HR executives need to do. One example of this comes from Dwight Eisenhower, a military leader and the 34th President of the United States, who effectively led both the American government and the Allied Forces in Europe in defeating Adolf Hitler. Eisenhower's leadership can provide lessons for top senior HR executives in today's organisational challenges. For example, he argued that successful leaders must care for their people as individuals, always remain optimistic, and place themselves with and for the people. Hitler has been posited as a charismatic leader as he converted many brilliant people to follow him, but the difference with his leadership style is that he represents the "Black Hat" of leadership. A leadership status that is not only a failing platform but one that represents destruction as opposed to innovation, expansion, and HR development.

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Today's HR executives should also be aware that effective HR leaders prefer the long-term to the short-term. These leaders do not give up on ensuring the long-term survival of their company in pursuit of short-term profits. A great example of this leadership is embodied in Abraham Lincoln. He did not abandon what guaranteed the long-term survival of the United States of America by abolishing slavery at the same time as many of his critics attacked him brutally, telling them that they answered:

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Lincoln's futuristic transformation, now hundreds of years later, reveals how one right decision led to the unity and long-term survival of the United States. On the other hand, this historical incident shows another truth, which is that the focus of HR leadership in the long-term is accompanied by pain and authentic leadership. The reality is that HR leaders are visible everywhere, and this type of leader wins over their own human nature, which does not seek uncertainty. These leaders accept uncertainty about their decisions and

prefer a probable but unusually excellent outcome to a relatively good and certain outcome. An excellent example of such a feature of this leadership can also be seen in Abraham Lincoln's decision to abolish slavery. While this decision caused a great civil war, the southern states of America, which had warned that they would not accept President Lincoln's decision, started a rebellion. While this rebellion could have meant the end of Abraham Lincoln, Lincoln was able to move forward and triumph in this engineering of disruption by accepting high uncertainty, having an unparalleled commitment, and becoming a model for true leaders around the world. That said, the Southern leaders at first brutally beat the Northern leaders. However, they did not have the wherewithal of a true leader. Freedom for all men that are created equal was part of the Northern VABE (values, assumptions, beliefs, and expectations). In the South, VABEs of people were not addressed; they were only focused on the visible behaviour of winning and spreading the conscious thought that the South needed to succeed in the Union.

Another characteristic of effective HR leaders is that they have started to engineer disruption, and this passion and interest are like a powerful driving engine that makes them win against resistance. They resist the temptations of new, higher-paying jobs and pursue oganisational transformation they are passionate about. A great example of this leadership characteristic can be seen in a leader like George Washington, who, while he had the opportunity to become a monarch, decided that the free country would always be governed by a presidential system. Today, how many business leaders think like George Washington, another true leader, did, and are committed to their organisation and prefer the organisation's success to their own success.

In Closing

Many HR executives are familiar with HR leadership surveys developed by scholars, and this article is not about measuring aptitude or defining HR leadership styles. It is about getting the information needed to be successful in the right hands of HR executives worldwide. We attempted to blend scholarly concepts with real-world applications by thoroughly looking at the best examples of leadership. Examples of true Leaders, such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Dwight Eisenhower, show that these leaders are ahead of their time and understand things that other leaders fail to understand. HR executives can now see that true leaders can make a fundamental change in the processes by which organisations serve their clients. And success can be more effective when HR leadership is applied to change attitudes and assumptions. Without a grasp on this one tenet, HR executives are bound to fail.

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SAVE THE DATE REMINDER

The 2027 Global HR Conference

will take place on Monday 14th June, 2027
at
The Royal Automobile Club, Pall Mall, London
from 12pm - 4.30pm

To register your interest in this event, please email:
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