

I have been asked to share a few thoughts on leadership since the bulk of my business career was in leadership at IBM. My leadership roles began in 1975 as a marketing manager in Denver, a branch manager in Chicago, and Segment Executive for security products for North America.



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In all of these roles over this span of 36 years in management, one of the most important requirements was goals. In business, goals are presented to us and have to do with simple matters such as revenue, profit, share price appreciation.

But every organization has some simple and even obvious goals. For example, at Mass last Sunday, the pastor wrote in the bulletin that during October the parish had done the annual Sunday Mass census and that attendance had deteriorated almost 6% from the last year: which he didn't like.

Now in business this would be the start of goal setting. Perhaps it is the same for the pastor and the diocese. Next year our goal will be to increase attendance 7%. We will reach this by increasing youth attendance by 7%, divorced attendance by 10%, new members by 10% from nearby churches.

The creation of action plans to reach the goals comes next, such as open houses, advertising, etc., with creating, and leading a team being the most important role of effective leaders. The team gathers to set up the action plans and reach the goals.

Over the years, I have had a number of highly effective teams that stay in touch to this day. One team of 8 managers from my office in the 1980s gets together twice each year for golf or weddings or other activities. These reunions have been occurring for over 30 years. We also email each other daily. This team was the top ranked branch office of 200 offices in IBM over a span of 4 years. Eight of my twenty managers from this period became IBM vice presidents. They are all winners. Winning is the #1 goal of any team: Winning, Winning, Winning.

This doesn't happen in a vacuum. Winning is always accomplished with a foundation of integrity. And leaders do not survive without integrity. People will see shifting principles for punishment or reward, shortcuts in quality or business ethics or fair treatment of customers.

One other major quality of great leaders is that of knowledge of the business. My practice was the old bromide: MBWA Manage By Wandering Around. I would wander all over the branch to see what people were doing and what problems they needed help with, thus learning processes that needed improvement. Most of all I spent time with customers. They pay the bills. They keep the company alive. This level of involvement helps to enlighten the leader and provide the intelligence needed to lead the winning team.

By John Suehr