

## **Abstract of a book - "LEADERS",**

by Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus.

*"People do not want to be managed. They want to be led. If you want to manage somebody, manage yourself. Do what well and you will be ready to stop managing and start leading."*

*" Leaders have compelling intentions and these pull people towards them. Intensely coupled with commitment is magnetic."*

*"Leaders have a pivotal responsibility to communicate the blue print which shapes and interpretes situations so that the actions of employees are guided by common interpretations of reality."*

These are a few sample quotes from an excellent book "**Leaders**" written by Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus. The book is an outcome of a study of 90 leaders from different companies in America, who successfully led their establishments to the stage of excellence. The book brings out difference between management and leadership. The crucial distinction between managers and leaders has been forcefully brought out through crisp and appropriately worded sentences like - 'Managers are people who do things right and Leaders are people who do the right thing.'

The message distilled out of the observations interviews of 90 leaders is given in four major areas of competency, four types of human handling skills, as follows :-

### I. Attention through Vision :-

While developing attention among followers through vision a leader creates a focus, an agenda, a concern with outcome, result orientation. Essence of this point is given in a quotation by T.W. Lawrence - *"All men dream but not equally. Those who dream by night in dusty recesses of their minds, awake to find that it was vanity. But the dreams of the day are dangerous men, that they may act their dreams with eyes to make it possible."*

## II. Meaning through Communication :-

many people have rich ideas but without communication nothing will be realised. A successful leader possesses the capacity to relate a compelling image of a desired state of affairs - the kind of image that induces enthusiasm and commitment in others. While all organisations depend upon existence of shared meanings and interpretations of reality which facilitate co-ordinated action, the author says that successful leaders are those persons who articulate and define what has previously remained implicit or unsaid; then they invent images, metaphors and models that provide focus for new attention. In short an essential factor in leadership is the capacity to influence and organise meaning for the members of the organisation.

While making a point that leadership creates a new audience for its ideas, the authors bitterly criticise today's organisational landscape by saying that "a great idea is hatched, responsibility is delegated. Then it is delegated again. Then it is like a thalidomide child with no parents - certainly not what the leaders intended or anticipated. Lack of clarity makes bureaucracies little more than mechanisms for the evasion of responsibility and guilt".

## III. Trust through Positioning :

Trust implies accountability, predictability, reliability and makes it possible for organisations to work. We trust people who are predictable, whose positions are known and who keep at it. The authors have emphasised the point that leaders are persons who create trust among the followers, by making themselves known and making their positions clear. The work position is used here to convey a set of actions necessary to implement the vision of a leader in the context of environment around. The authors describe four "Organisational Selves" or structures.

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- a. 'manifest' organisation as seen on the organisation chart.
- b. 'assumed' organisation, the one that individuals perceive actually to be existing.
- c. 'extant' organisation which is a situation as revealed through systematic investigation.
- d. 'requisite' organisation or the organisation as it would look if it were in accord with the reality of the situation within which it exists.

If there is no close alignment of these four organisational concepts, the organisation identity is confused and integrity difficult to achieve. The authors say that this cannot be achieved without positioning.

#### IV. Development of Self through Positive Self Regard.

The three major components of positive selfregard are - knowledge of one's strengths, the capacity to nurture and develop those strengths, and the ability to discern the fit between one's strengths and weaknesses and the organisational needs. Individuals who possess positive self regard are good at their jobs, they have requisite skills, they enjoy their work, it satisfies their basic needs and motives, and finally you are proud of their work. The authors provide five key skills present in a person having positive self-regard or emotional wisdom.

- a. The ability to accept people as they are, not as you would like them to be.
- b. The capacity to approach relationships and problems in terms of the present rather than the past.
- c. The ability to treat those who are close to you with the same courteous attention that you extend to strengths and casual acquaintances.
- d. The ability to trust others, even if the risk seems great.
- e. The ability to do without constant approval and recognition from others.

The authors describe a characteristic features of leaders in a team 'Wallenda Factor.' Wallenda was a great tight rope aerialist whose life was at stake each time he walked a tight rope, and never hesitated to put all his energies into his task without thinking about failure. Shortly after

Wallenda fell to his death in 1978, his wife said - "*For three months prior to it, Wallenda thought of falling. It was the first time he said he had never thought about it and it seems to me that he put all his energies into 'not falling' rather than walking the tight rope.* Leaders simply do not think about failure, don't even use the word, relying on such synonyms as "mistake", "false start", "mess", "hash", "set-back", "error", etc..

Though the book is written after interviewing 90 leaders from business and industry, the four strategies of leading an organisation are very well applicable to educational institutions. Therefore this book must be read in original by every person who wants to lead his educational institute. The book is available in paper-back edition from Harper & Row, New York.

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