

PRESENTATION

by

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“Key Leadership Qualities”

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Today, in Jamaica, we have come to witness a distinct blur between what is right and what is wrong. In many instances, behavioural patterns which were previously considered to be the exception have now morphed into the norm.

What were once regarded as acceptable standards of decency, values, ethics, morality and discipline, have now fallen prey to a society that has seemingly lost its sense of direction – a society that many feel is bereft of strong leadership and positive role models in most, if not all of its spheres.

Our country yearns and cries out for Leaders who are willing to stand up for the right things.

You, who, by your presence here today, have proved your ability to excel, must now exude qualities of good leadership, by your demonstrated attitudes and actions at the work place and in your personal life.

I believe that there exists a potential, which is inherent in all of us, to achieve great things, inclusive of positions of top leadership and great influence.

It is, therefore, against this background that I would want to talk to you about some of these qualities of great Leadership – qualities which I will challenge you to embrace and to go forth and display.

In 2010, over 10 years ago, while addressing the then Graduating Class of the Mona School of Business, I spoke on the topic of Leadership. Regrettably, many of the things that I said then are still applicable today. Very little has changed for the better in our society, between then and now.

So let us begin.

First, I must exhort you to become Leaders for change.

As the great American President, Harry S. Truman, once said:

“Men make history, and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better”.

In the political sphere in Jamaica, we need politicians who are prepared to lead the change for a new political dispensation – a dispensation which places the interests of the people and the country first, versus doing that which is politically expedient.

We need political leaders who are strong on ethics, integrity, principle and discipline, and who are prepared to promote systems of good governance in government by ensuring transparency, accountability and the due adherence to the Rule of Law in the affairs of the State. We need political leaders who will hold true to the solemn oath which they have taken to uphold the Constitution of Jamaica.

In the Public Sector, we need bold new leaders who are prepared to be like the distinguished and honoured public servants of old. We need senior public servants who will stand up for what is right in their stewardship and management of the day to day activities of our country’s Public Sector Agencies. Above all, we need public servants who understand that their only purpose is to serve the interests of the people.

In the Private Sector, we must cultivate leaders who will be change agents for implanting a new mindset in the management of the Jamaican business enterprise – Business Leaders who will be mindful of the fact that the bottom line is not the only line, but that

there is also a critical and indispensable place for ethical practices in every element of any commercial undertaking.

To become true Leaders, you must always do what is right ... not what is popular or what is expedient!

A great American of Jamaican lineage, the former United States Secretary of State, General Colin Powell, elaborated on the subject in another way when he had this to say:

"Leadership cannot be a popularity contest. Trying not to offend anyone, or trying to get everyone to like you are sign posts on the road to mediocrity. Leaders who are afraid to get people angry are likely to waver and procrastinate when it comes to making tough decisions or choices. Leaders who care more about being liked than being effective are unlikely to confront people who need confronting. In short, they won't challenge the status quo".

But what does all of this mean? Among other things:

1. It means that a true Leader is a person who will take an ethical or principled position on a matter even when he knows that same is likely to alienate him from his colleagues or supporters, or make him the subject of ridicule or criticism.
2. It also means that a true Leader will never be scared to confront that which needs confronting or to say that which needs to be said, even if doing so will result in a "rocking of the boat"?

3. And, it also means, as Tony Blair, the former British Prime Minister, once said, that **“The art of leadership is saying no, not yes. It is very easy to say yes.”**

To become a true and successful Leader, it is imperative that you must establish for yourself a set of basic values from which you must not depart in your dealings with your fellow man or colleague.

Let us talk about some of the ones that I would regard to be paramount.

You must be honest, truthful, kind and fair. Integrity, character, self respect, respect for others, and your strict adherence to the highest possible ethical standards must be the benchmark of everything that you do.

In doing what is right and ethical, you must at all times be forthright and fearless, never straying off course, never succumbing to what the misguided may deem to be the praiseworthy or popular thing to do, and never allowing yourself to be intimidated by your detractors.

Indeed, you should never fear to act when you must act and, conversely, you must never act out of fear when you should not act.

You must always be strong and courageous, but at the same time you must be humble and eschew pride and arrogance.

You must practice self-discipline remembering, as you must know by now, that without hard work and discipline, it is difficult to become a Top Achiever.

As Joseph Addison, the English poet and politician, once said, **“self discipline is that which, next to virtue, truly and essentially raises one man above another”**. So with faith, discipline and selfless devotion to duty, there is nothing worthwhile that you cannot achieve.

Be wary of associating yourselves with unsavoury characters or persons of ill-repute. If you are in doubt about the pedigree of an acquaintance, then do as the Japanese Proverb wisely recommends: **“When the character of a man is not clear to you, look at his friends.”**

Should you fail to heed this warning, then you too will risk being judged by the company that you keep. Innately, you know what is wrong and what is unprincipled. So avoid it.

As you practice and inculcate the virtues of a true Leader, you should expect to become a potential victim of jealousy, hate, vindictiveness or even the occasional false conspiracy. As it has been said, **“people with courage and character always seem sinister to the rest”**.

When you do all these things, and despite the opposition that you will no doubt encounter along the way, you will, over time, develop strength of character. You will grow in self-confidence and, inevitably, you will become an inspiration to your peers, your subordinates and your superiors alike, and you will earn their respect.

At the workplace, and in your professional endeavors, you must always seek to be the consummate professional. You must cultivate a superior work ethic – one which has no place for mediocrity or failure.

Let the pursuit of excellence be your goal in everything that you do. This has been described as doing the right things right by selecting the most important things to be done, and then accomplishing them 100% correctly – the first time, 100% of the time!

To be a successful and effective Leader of any organization, you must be highly organized in the preparation and execution of your daily work tasks.

If you are unable to organize your self, your work and your documentation, you will be unable to effectively multi-task, or pivot, when the situation requires it, which it will inevitably and invariably do.

One key element of being able to effectively and to efficiently execute your tasks in a highly multi-tasked environment, is to delegate and to do so effectively. However, at the end of the day, you must remember that, as the Leader of your organization, the buck will stop with you.

Consequently, this means that, where possible, you must surround yourself with competent colleagues who share your values and your high sense of accomplishment, and to whom you can confidently delegate critical tasks.

In doing this, it is more likely that the systems that you have set in place to ensure that the delegated tasks are satisfactorily executed on your behalf, will work. Remember, it was President Reagan who said that **“you should trust, but you must also verify”**.

In your personal and work perspectives, you should try to be forward looking and forward thinking.

You must train yourself and your mind to think about every potential eventuality that is likely to occur from a given course of action, or a key decision, and then weigh the relative pros and cons that are likely to arise from each, before you proceed. In a manner of speaking, it's called being circumspect!

If you do this, you will insulate yourself from the mistakes and irretrievable pitfalls that others often make when they are being expedient or when they tend to act on the spur of the moment. You will also be one or even two steps ahead of the game – and ahead of the competition. I call it the **“Tree-Trunk Principle”**.

Indeed, and although he failed to heed his own advice, you should remember what Denzil Washington said in the award winning movie, ‘Training Day’: **“The game is chess, not checkers!”**

As Leaders, you must also encourage yourself to think creatively, and out of the box. Set definitive goals for all that you would like to accomplish and then develop realistic time-based, step by step plans, to secure your objective. Constantly audit your progress so that you can make the requisite adjustments to ensure that you remain on track.

Listen keenly and carefully to others, and pay due regard to constructive criticism, and then come to a considered and informed position.

Make your word be your bond. This is critical. A man who fails to keep his commitment will fast lose the respect of his colleagues, his co-workers and all those who interface with him.

In your dealings with your colleagues, co-workers or those who may report to you, remember that one of the hardest tasks of leadership is understanding that you are not what you think you are, but what you are perceived by others to be.

Accordingly, you must lead by example, always doing that which you would want others to do. Faithfully and openly comply with the very rules and procedures which you have set in place for others to follow.

If you stick to this simple principle, you will be surprised how effective you will become in motivating your staff, your colleagues or your supporters.

Be flexible in the discharge of your own work obligations, always giving more than is expected of you and always giving of your best. At the same time, however, you must be inflexible on issues of ethics.

In this vein, and in particular, you must be aware of becoming an unknowing participant to suspect, unethical, unprincipled, improper, irregular, unlawful or illegal practices. Some of these are likely to be carried out in the name of savvy business practices, or business expediency, or passed off as that which is “OK” or acceptable to others.

Do not countenance, give succour to, nor become an accessory to indiscipline, or to disrespectful or unbecoming conduct. Remember that you must strive, at all times, to be the standard bearer of not only what is right but what is perceived to be right.

As true Leaders, you must also ensure that, by your conduct, you will become role models, mentors and exemplars for those who you lead.

Perhaps there are colleagues who are looking up at you as an example of what they would like to become. You must understand this so that you will continue to motivate them by what you do, what you stand for, and what you accomplish.

You must also remember that you are now senior employees and managers of one of Jamaica's leading and most prestigious institutions - One that has been entrusted, by our Parliament, with the responsibility to ensure the highest standards of probity, good governance, integrity and ethical conduct in the Jamaica Public Sector.

You must, therefore, make the Integrity Commission – our Chairman, our Commissioners, your Director and all of your fellow colleagues – proud of you. In turn, we will make all of Jamaica proud of the Integrity Commission.

Remember, that our duty is owed only and solely to the People and Taxpayers of Jamaica. It is their interest, and their interest alone, that we are sworn to serve and protect, and on whose behalf we have committed to faithfully discharge our functions.

Make the pursuit of excellence, integrity and character, your guiding lights, remembering that **“of all the properties which belong to honorable men, not one is so highly prized as that of character”**.

Develop and maintain an abiding faith in God so that you will also be spiritually guided and comforted.

If you do all these things, there will be no goal, objective or ideal that you will be unable to achieve. There will be no obstacle or impediment that can stand in the way of your quest to become a true, exemplary and great Leader.

You will soar to the highest of heights and you will continue to make us and your country extremely proud of you.

Thank you.