Think back over your years in business, from the early days when you came into the workplace. Is there someone who inspired you along the way? Someone who helped you dig deep and find the best you had to offer, a boss or manager who helped you see that you could succeed?

I’ll bet you can think of at least one person who did more than just make sure you punched your time card. Was it someone who motivated, even challenged you in a way that helped you find out what you’re really made of?

The way you lead will make a lasting impact on how your people perform and how they remember you years down the road. Your leadership style can make the difference between both personal and professional long-term success or failure. The gap between the resonant “good” boss and the dissonant “bad” boss can be small and easily sutured. Or it can be a divide as gaping as the Grand Canyon, one that’s nearly impossible to bridge.

Resonant leadership makes the difference. But what does “resonant leadership” mean?

A resonant leader inspires others by creating a work environment that supports innovation and change, according to the book Resonant Leadership by Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee. This type of environment not only allows for but also encourages creativity, experimentation and risk taking. It doesn’t matter if these risks end with a victory or a constructive mistake; either will uncover better ways to serve customers or achieve goals. Further, these leaders are able to be honest with themselves and others while holding staff accountable to goals and company standards of excellence. They work with individuals to find the sweet spot in their personal set of strengths to benefit both the workers and the company.

And they manage their teams in ways that build loyalty and trust, which ultimately leads to better business. This is resonant leadership.

Does resonant leadership really matter? Absolutely. This is more than feel-good stuff. It’s about the bottom line, when you acknowledge how leadership impacts productivity and employee retention. Experienced employees are your No. 1 competitive resource. Great leadership creates the kind of environment that produces a stable, innovative staff that will want to stay the course for the long term and invest in the company’s future to ensure sustainable success.

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Evaluate your competition, then look closely at your crews and management staff. Could it be that you’d have a greater opportunity for market dominance if you changed your and your management team’s leadership style?

The leaders who stand apart from the rest drive success through positive emotion. To do so you’ll have to be willing to put some time into learning more about your leadership style. It starts with a decision to take an honest look in the mirror and listen openly to what others (genuinely) share about how your leadership style affects them. Often the one at the top has no clue what those who report to him or her actually think. (Let’s face it: It’s not often that someone will risk his or her job security to be honest with an overbearing boss.)

The good news is much of what you learn will be affirming and show you the strengths you have on which to build. Great leaders are open to reality. After your reality check you’ll become more mindful of who you truly are and more accurately gauge your internal emotions and reactions.

With this new clarity and awareness you’ll be more able to learn to manage your emotions and reactions so others feel safe with you. And, once you’re more aware and able to manage your emotions you’ll begin to look at the people around you differently and understand how their emotions impact the way they work and relate to others.

That awareness allows you to manage your relationships in a way that fosters trust and growth. It’s all about building your leadership style, which one you aspire to and which to avoid.

VISIONARY
This leader lets the team know where they’re going without providing a road map. The visionary helps people feel safe and free to be creative and explore options—even to take risks. The visionary inspires those around him/her and tends to be transparent/authentic. This transparency is important, because when a leader is seen as insincere the team loses trust, which kills creativity. Empathy is critical for a visionary leader—reading and knowing what others think and feel helps this type of leader communicate an inspiring vision.

COACHING
The coaching leader is great one on one, helping to develop strengths in others. With the competencies of emotional awareness and empathy, this leader helps the team identify and accomplish career goals.

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