

The Sink Or Swim Approach To Leadership

By Lora J Adrianse

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Looking around in most corporate environments today you'll find mission, vision and values statements proudly displayed on the walls, in print materials and even engraved in granite. Often, they've invested a great deal of time; effort and expense in crafting just the right message to best describe the foundational principles of the company. I can't help but stop, take notice; and then wonder how this foundational wisdom is incorporated into the day-to-day operations. What's in it for the operational leaders to carry out the mission in ways that align with the vision and values? How are they taught to walk the talk?

Many operational leaders today were developed and promoted from inside the ranks of the organization. In fact, most internally developed leaders were promoted without consideration of the potential to lead and inspire others. They're "crowned" with a title and thrown into the corporate waters to sink or swim. Those that swim have enough stamina to figure out what it takes to stay above water. Those that sink are simply in over their heads and can't find a way to surface for air.

I can't help but wonder how the "sink or swim" approach fits into those mission, vision and values statements. The new leaders who are trying to learn on their own without a coach or a trainer take longer, make more avoidable mistakes and often lose their motivation and enthusiasm. Multiply that by the number of their direct reports and the equation becomes an issue that's costing the organization dearly.

If your organization is one that values development and promotion from within the ranks, make a commitment today to establish a new process, and most of all provide the support and training to ensure success. The future leadership within your company depends on it.

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