

# Building business: contribution or contamination?

 By [Linda Hamman](#)

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It's reassuring to think that leaders are born. Frankly, I don't buy that. Oh, there may be some exceptions, mostly in history, but good business leaders do not feature among them.

Effective leaders aren't born effective - they're nurtured, developed and groomed: it's an ongoing progression of education, acquired skills, training, self-analysis, knowledge and authentic experience - and yes, there may be some with innate attributes that draw them naturally towards a leadership role.

The fact is, we pamper our business leaders: much of our focus is spent on them - how they should behave, how to improve themselves, motivational talks, self-help business books, effective communication, and any number of "How to..." leadership books : the list is endless.

## Food for thought

And here's something to give you food for thought - Amazon's website revealed that 95 220 books have been dedicated to improving leaders and only 792 books to improving contributors: that's a 120:1 ratio!

Yet contributors make up the largest part of any business's workforce - without them, the leaders have no one to lead and the work won't get done, and the organisation won't achieve its objectives or realise its vision.

So why isn't more time spent on building contributors' capacity when, by doing so, business will move forward quicker, leaders will have more to time to do what they should be doing (ie strategising and planning) and less time policing?

In my opinion, there's an answer to why we're stuck on a hamster wheel: leaders can't find time to build the capacity of the contributors because they're either a) too busy building their own pedestal/climbing the corporate ladders, or b) too busy doing the work themselves because the contributors aren't capable. Sound familiar?

## Put some productive energy

Perhaps it's time we all put a stop to the unproductive hamster wheel and put some productive energy into building the contributors' capacity by talking and, in doing so, teaching them how to be excellent contributors - and as leaders, put the effort into not only being good leaders but being a good contributor as well, because even if we are leaders, surely we must also contribute to the greater good?

So what is needed in order to become good contributors? Here are 10 key guidelines:

1. Don't blame others for unpopular decisions or policies; a contributor's job is to support, not undermine.
2. Have conflict with those who set the strategy if necessary, but do it in private; avoid embarrassing situations, and never reveal to others what was discussed.
3. Make the decision, then run it past those in control; use your initiative.
4. Accept responsibility whenever it is offered.
5. Tell the truth and don't quibble; those above you will be giving advice up the chain of command, based on what you said.
6. Do your homework; provide all the information needed to make a decision; anticipate possible questions.
7. When making a recommendation, remember who will probably have to implement it. This means you must know your own limitations and weaknesses, as well as your strengths.
8. Keep your people informed of what's going on in the business; they have a right to know.
9. If you see a problem, fix it. Don't worry about who would have got the blame or who now gets the praise.
10. Put in more than an honest day's work, add value, demonstrate how YOU make a difference

### **Contributor determine leaders**

Leaders must have a clear, truthful understanding of who they are, what they know, and what they can do. And it's important to remember that it is the contributors, not the leaders, who determine if they are effective, successful leaders.

If the contributors lack confidence in you, or don't trust you as their leader - the result will be contamination... not contribution!

### **ABOUT LINDA HAMMAN**

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