



Insights
FROM THE
GARDEN

LEADERSHIP

Dodong
cacanando

DO BUSINESS LIKE A FARMER | DO FARMING AS A BUSINESS

ABOUT LEADERSHIP

If you want a business to become profitable, I would say that you should not focus on the profit. When it comes to sales, I would say that if you want to hit your target, you should not focus on it! Do these ideas seem weird? Where did I get these odd concepts?

I learned them from farming.

I learned that if you want to become fruitful, you should not focus on the fruits but focus instead on growing a healthy plant. Kasi fruits are just natural by-products of a good plant. And the foundation of a healthy plant is a strong and robust root system.

The roots, though unseen, are the most important part of the plant. They determine how big a plant will be and how fruitful it will become.

The roots represent the plant's ability to stay put and absorb the nutrients around it so that it can use them to fuel its growth, and ultimately produce fruits. And so, if the roots are the moST important part of the plant, our abilities—which are built on skills and character—are the most important factors in building a successful business. But abilities cannot be gained overnight; they are nurtured and developed over time.

If you are a business leader or a sales manager, you must help the people you work with to develop and nurture their abilities.

When they joined your organization, most of your people did not have the necessary abilities you need in your team. But like you, they also want to succeed, kaya nga lang they do not know how. So, if you want to succeed, you must be ready to spend time nurturing your people and developing their abilities because their success will be yours too!

EVERYONE WANTS TO DO A GOOD JOB

There are two important people management principles I live by today. The first is something I learned from my days in Hewlett-Packard (HP), and it is this, "Everybody wants to do a good job, and nobody wants to fail. When people fail, it is because they either do not know their job or they are in the wrong job."

In the past, I would always be on the lookout for people who make mistakes kasi paniwala ko noon may taong sadyang masama o palpak. Minsan nga feeling ko parang gusto nila o natutuwa sila pag napapagalitan! Have you ever felt this way toward your people?

Let me ask you, gusto mo bang napapagalitan ng boss mo? Hindi, di ba? Pero napagalitan ka na ba? I'm sure! E sinadya mo bang magkamali para mapagalitan? Of course not! Very discouraging ata 'yun and nakakawala ng dignidad! Over time, I realized na 'yan din ang pakiramdam ng lahat ng tao. Hindi nila sinasadyang magkamali kasi ayaw nilang mapagalitan. Pag nagkamali sila, it is because they either do not know their job or they are in the wrong job.

As I matured, na-realize ko na walang bobo at walang masamang tao. I learned that everyone wants to succeed and be recognized as a good person. Pero marami sa kanila, mali lang ang pagpapalaki at mali rin ang naiturong ugali sa kanila. When I say they do not know their jobs, I am not only referring to the skills required to do their job. For a person to succeed kasi, he needs to have the right attitude and discipline as well. Unfortunately, these are the things most parents, and even our school system, have failed to teach.

HP taught me to treat my people according to their unique needs, but at the same time not to compromise the standards we agreed upon. As a leader, I have to help them get from where they are today, to where God wants them to be. This means helping them acquire the skills their jobs require and developing the values they need. I also have to accept the fact that my people can mature only over time, so I need to persistently work with them, because their growth will decide the success of my business.

Pero what if a person continues to fail in spite of the help, I give him? Should I then fire him? In the past I would. I changed my reaction when I understood the principle of HP. Today, I will talk to the person in private and tell him na baka he is better off somewhere else. I will encourage him to find a job where he can excel. When he decides to do so, I will give him pabaon (some money) to help him get by. I will do this for two reasons: one, to reward him for trying to fit into the company and second, to buy peace of mind.

KNOW THE CONDITION OF YOUR FLOCK

The second important people management principle I keep is found in Proverbs 27:23 (NASB) which says, "Know well the condition of your flocks, and pay attention to your herds." If you read up to verse 27, it says that if you do this, there will always be food in your house, and you will even have enough money to buy more land! Isn't that wonderful? And all you have to do is to know well the condition of your people and pay attention to their needs!

Can I ask you a question? Para sa iyo, what would be the most important question you can ask your people? Is it, "Kamusta na ang benta mo? Are you meeting your KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)?" O kaya, "How well are you managing your processes?" Dati 'yan ang tanong ko sa mga tao ko. But today, as I learn from Proverbs 27, the most important question I ask them is, "Kamusta ka na?"

When I ask this, I am not just concerned about their job, their targets or their KPIs only; I also want to know how they are doing at home, how their health is, how they are getting along with their peers, how they are dealing with the challenges of work and the customers, etc., etc. Pakialamero, ano?

When I ask these questions, people would normally say, "Okay lang ho." Maski alam kong may pinagdadaan silang problema. So, I make it a point to probe deeper. Normally, I do this while having a meal with them because I noticed people are often relaxed when they are eating. Besides, pag pinagagalitan ko sila hindi sila makasagot kasi their mouths are full. Ha ha ha! Joke lang.

By wanting to know the condition of my people, I do not mean that I pamper them. No, quite the opposite. By knowing how they are doing, I get to see who are lazy, who have personal struggles or maybe even health issues. I also get to know if there are conflicts inside the company. If I can, I help address their concerns ASAP because I realized that if these issues are not addressed early and properly, they may become complicated to handle. Besides, some of these concerns may slow them down; thus, affecting the overall performance of our team. By addressing them early, I am able to help them achieve their full potential so we can all take advantage of the opportunities that come our way.

The individual health of your people will determine the overall health of your organization. And their individual successes will decide your own success. That is why it is essential to know the condition of your flocks.

WHEN DO YOU GIVE UP ON YOUR PEOPLE?

While I was sharing these leadership principles, a friend asked, "So, when do you give up on people?" Ang sagot ko, "When they give up on me and when they cause division inside the company." What does these mean?

I know people will always commit mistakes. So as a leader, I will mentor, work with them, and help them achieve the goals I give them. In return, I expect them to listen to me, follow my instructions, and do their best. Their best may not be at par with my standards today, but if they cooperate and try to continually improve, in due time they will be able to meet my expectations.

But if after doing this, the person still insists on doing things his way and refuses to be corrected, then this tells me that he does not want me to lead him anymore. This is what it means when I said he is giving up on me. In response, I will tell him that he will be better off somewhere else. So, I will encourage him to work for someone he will listen to and follow.

In the same way, I will also give up on anyone who will cause any division inside the company. I will do this to follow the counsel of Titus 3:10–11 (NASB1995) which says, 'Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.' I will give up on such a man for the same reason I mentioned above. When a person causes division, it means he does not want me to be his leader anymore.

But when a person listens and tries hard to improve, when his spirit is willing even though he may be a bit slow, I will continue to work with him. I have found that people like them are very loyal when given a chance.

BRINGING OUT THE POTENTIAL IN YOUR PEOPLE

Someone asked me, "What changes did you do to bring out the potential in your people?"

I realized then that my people are like children. Each of them has his own strengths and weaknesses. So, I manage them with this mindset: "If you want to be fair to everybody, do not treat them equally!" While this may seem illogical, I learned that I need to treat each person according to their unique needs.

A few of my people in HP were sharp and could easily understand instructions quickly. But most of them needed to see an example of how things should be done before they could effectively carry out what I had asked them to do. I guess this explains why YouTube is very popular. People generally tend to learn faster by imitating others first before they can formulate their own responses. I've had people who had developed bad habits even before they came to work with me. And so, I needed to discipline them first before they could become effective. As a whole, most of them carried different baggages that in one way or another wore them down—some emotional, others financial, physical, etc. I realized that before I could even succeed in my job, I need to help them overcome their own unique struggles.

I remember a sales engineer who could not seem to breakthrough even though he worked very hard. As I spent time with him, I found out that while he worked in Makati, his wife was working on the opposite side of Metro Manila, so they had to leave their children with the grandparents. They got to see each other only once a week, and this became a source of great stress. So, before I can be an effective boss I needed to first be a counselor and friend. I asked the couple to attend a marriage seminar in CCF. I explained the benefits of living together as a family and taught them to trust the Lord with their financial needs. When his problem got fixed, he became one of our top performers and even headed the sales team when I left HP.

According to the HP Way, everybody wants to do a good job, and no one wants to fail! On my own I learned that what we see as irritating attitudes of our people are just external expressions of the burdens they carry. If the leader wants to succeed, he must decide to either help bear the burdens of his people or fire them in order to remove these problems. But when he decides to do the latter, he will need to still bear the burdens of the next person he hires. This is the cross that every leader must carry. But with this cross comes the privilege of improving lives and accomplishing greater things for the Lord.

THE MEASURE OF AN EFFECTIVE LEADER

I was taught that the best way to measure the effectiveness of a leader are through the decisions he makes, the way he arrives at them, and the outcome of his actions.

When I was still with Hewlett-Packard, we hired a sales engineer who, even after two years of trainings and coaching, was unable to deliver the numbers. So, one day, I went to my boss in Singapore and told him that it was time to cut our losses. Kasi for me, the person did not only fail to deliver on his commitments, but he was also pulling the team down, since others had to continuously compensate for what he lacked. Di ba may sense naman yung recommendation ko? But my boss only answered me by asking, "What did you not do for the person?"

Ang ibig sabihin ng tanong niya was, "Where did you fail as his leader?" Imagine that! Pinagtiisan at tinulungan ko 'yung tao for two years, tapos ngayon ako pa rin ang may kasalanan? This made me so angry and frustrated for two weeks. But when I finally calmed down, I realized that my boss was right! I realized na 'yung magagaling kong mga tao, magagaling na sila dati pa so konting tulong na lang ang kailangan nila. Pero itong mahina, hindi ko napagaling, and yet when we hired him, we all believed that he had potential. And as a leader, I failed to bring that out!

Ngayon, para sa akin, the measure of a leader's effectiveness is his ability to make his people succeed. While it is not his responsibility to do their jobs, he is there to help them succeed in the responsibilities they have been given because the leader's success is just the sum total of the success of everyone under him. When the leader makes a decision, it is his people who need to implement them, and their success will decide the outcome.

This mindset has worked well for me. In our farm, we have done more things with less people through this approach. It also made me realize that it does not have to be lonely at the top, because when my people succeed, they are excited to discuss their accomplishments with me. This was not so in the past. When I did not help them and they failed, they would avoid me because they know our conversation would be unpleasant and uncomfortable.

I realized that when you seek the welfare of your people, they will in turn seek your welfare as their leader.

SHOULD IT BE LONELY AT THE TOP?

They say the downside of being a leader is that it is lonely at the top. This is what I used to believe in, and I have personally experienced it myself particularly when I led one of the divisions of HP Philippines back in the 1990s. However, my mindset changed when I understood what Jesus meant in Matthew 20:25- 26 (NASB 1995). "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant."

When I led like the Gentiles did, lording it over people, my people would show respect, but they would often stay away. So, it was lonely at the top! However, I did not like what Jesus suggested, that a great leader must have the heart of a servant. It seemed then that my choice was to either lord it over and be lonely or be a servant and be happy.

I understood the value of being a servant leader when I became a farmer. I initially saw its power not when I served people but when I served the plants and animals in the farm. When our hogs got sick, we really fed them with a spoon. As we served the pigs, they grew well and served us by giving us profit. When dry seasons came, we woke up at night to water the plants so that we may conserve water. As we served our plants, they gave us a good income to sustain our operation. As we served our livestock and plant, they served us in return.

Then I tried this on my people. Instead of lording over them, I decided to help them do their job well. Whenever I meet them, I always ask, "Kamusta ka na? May problema ba?" Pag mayroon, I find ways to help them address their problems so that they can work better. By helping them succeed, they helped me succeed in return. This was how I discovered that it does not have to be lonely at the top.

There are many leaders in Keepers whom I highly respect. There are too many of them to mention. But I respect them, not only because of what they have accomplished, but because of how they serve the needs of their people. In return for their service, I see their people serving their needs. Most of them are leaders who are not lonely because they love their people, and they respect them in return. I congratulate them for understanding the power of servant leadership.

ENJOY THE BEST YEARS OF YOUR LIFE

According to a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine (2018), the most productive age in a man's life is 60 to 70.¹

The second most productive age is between 70 and 80.

The third most productive age is between 50 to 60.

The average age of a Nobel Prize winner is 62.

The average age of a CEO in a Fortune 500 company is 63.

The average age of popes is 76.

The average age of the pastors of the 100 biggest churches in America is 71.²

What does this tell us? It seems that the best years of your life are between 60 to 80! You could do a lot more during these years. It is when you can do your best work.

In one forum about this study, someone posted, "Is it because 'pattarivu' (knowledge gained by experience) is 1000 times more valuable than padipparivu (knowledge gained by studies)?"³ It could be.

So, if you are between 60 and 70, or 70 and 80, you have the best and second-best years of your life! You have a lot going for you.

As for those of you who are young, do not rush through life but enjoy it as a journey because like a plant, you will bear fruit in the proper season.

When you force a plant to produce fruits before the proper season, its fruits will be bitter, and the plant will die prematurely. But, when you respect the plant's season, its fruits will be sweet and will produce more fruits year after year.

Interestingly, this is true for man. When you force a person to prosper at a very early age, his success will be bitter because it will come at the expense of his health and relationships. But when you allow them to grow according to his abilities and prosper at the right time, his success will be sweet, and he will be a blessing to everyone around him.

So, enjoy your life as a journey with the Lord and everyone you love.

1 <https://www.theweek.in/columns/shashi-tharoor/2019/12/06/why-we-should-increase-our-retirement-age.html>

2 <https://indusladies.com/community/threads/the-most-productive-age-as-per-research.309904/>

3 Ibid.