

OPTIMISM...A Must-Have Frame of Mind for Leaders

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Tony Dovale, a transformational keynote speaker once said, *“With the right mindset, you can survive, thrive, and grow. Even amidst turbulence and change”*. Having an optimistic mindset is a trait that most productive people and successful leaders possess despite challenges that may come their way. Once they have mastered the balance between optimism and accepting reality, they have discovered how to be happy, content, and ultimately triumphant in everything they do. As the quote from the famous Prime Minister during World War II, Winston Churchill states that *“a pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”* Having a positive mindset according to Losada (2004) is also having a positive feeling that can intensely improve the decisions people make and their level of performance at work. On the other hand, negativity hinders people’s experience because a negative frame of mind will put one in a “leave me alone” mode/bunker mode, and he/she is not on alert. Hence, reducing negativity is the sharpest way to increase one’s positivity ratio.

Optimism is defined as a tendency to expect positive results even when bad things happen because optimistic leaders always look at the good side, keep moving, and focus on the actions they can take to get themselves and their goals beyond the current crisis. This attitude explains the statement of Gloria Estefan, a Cuban-American Superstar, *“There are so many difficult things we are living through in the world today, so many terrible events, but we cannot let them stop us. No matter what happens, I feel you must move forward with positivity and not get sideswiped.”*

Moreover, it is important to remember that being optimistic does not mean seeing stars all the time. Instead, being optimistic leaders mean that they know things would not always go their way, but despite that, they remain confident that they will overcome their challenges eventually. As Martin Seligman, the Father of Positive Psychology defines optimism as reacting to problems with a sense of confidence and high personal ability. Specifically, optimistic leaders believe that negative events do not last, are limited in scope, and are manageable. Certainly, optimism, like other psychological thoughts, exists on variation. Optimistic leaders can also change their levels of optimism depending on the situations they are in. Hence, here the power of optimism comes.

Optimism turns leaders into being Opportunity Seekers

Optimistic leaders find challenging circumstances as opportunities to adapt to and respond to these situations to come up with better solutions, especially where the need for change came from outside the organization.

They tend to perform root cause analysis to identify the cause of not only their failure but also their future success. Thus, later they assign responsibility and accountability for both. With this kind of attitude, problem-solving, decision-making, and action-taking are more likely to create a constructive strategy to overcome difficulty and embrace opportunities. Moreover, they develop work value from active coping and looking to engage with the situation rather than go away from it. Because they look beyond the negative events toward the future, optimistic leaders are likely to be solution-focused. Hence, they move towards positive action, which is a key agent for change and success.

Optimism makes leaders Engaging Communicators and Good Motivators

Optimistic leaders balance the positive and the negative, hence their communication is more engaging and motivating. Optimistic leaders are better at telling positive things about future situations and they encourage those who are doubtful of their capabilities to see that there is a way through the current situation. Balanced messages would mean peoples' internal drive system engages and motivates them to get focused, pursue plans, and make progress. In an organization, this is very helpful in the sense that it drives shared performance and responsibilities and lessens the negative impact of change.

Pragmatic optimism serves as a Powerful Attitude of leaders

One kind of optimism that leaders must possess is pragmatic optimism which means being practical and realistic most of the time. Pragmatic optimists stabilize the present and the future. They are mindful of, and focused on, all aspects of the current situation, sensible about the work required to serve, and use their persistence to recover from obstacles and reach their goals. They are action-oriented and advocate the attitude, "let's go!" instead of "let's wait and see!"

In summary, for subordinates of various kinds, this must-have attitude of leaders is extremely powerful. It is about the balance between a realistic evaluation of where they are now and a positive force to recover and achieve success. This is called opportunity seeking and it is correlated with mindful learning; it encourages and motivates these people to develop new skills and try new things to adapt successfully to a situation or change.

Moreover, optimism has been proven to improve the quality of one's life. Gratitude is correlated with optimism and has been concluded that grateful people are happier, receive more social support, are less stressed, and are less depressed. And so, practice gratitude because this ancient tradition has been proven to have profound positive benefits on one's outlook, mental health, and subsequent behavior. Just a few moments each day to consider the things for which someone is grateful is enough to reap the rewards.

