

Decisive Leadership

The new norm to which the world has been forced to adjust as a consequence of the global COVID-19 Pandemic, represents a catalyst for change to the way labour leaders have done business before. Basically, this says that it is not business as usual. The fast-moving pace of the contemporary era in which we live, demands that there is decisive leadership at the level of national organizations. The labour movement finds itself having to make spontaneous major decisions on the behalf of the membership, but sometimes finds itself in the precarious position of having to refer to the membership for guidance and authority to act. While to some this may appear as a draw back to the authority which supposedly resides in the leadership of trade unions, the fact remains that these organizations have established processes and procedures which they are required to follow.

It is known that most trade unions leaders adopt the democratic style of leadership, and therefore tend to refrain from practicing autocratic leadership. The latter is something that is certainly likely to meet with some resistance. The labour movement in showing its preference for the democratic style of leadership, nonetheless accepts that its leaders would demonstrate a level of decisive leadership. Decisive leaders are those who seek out the appropriate information that is necessary to make a good decision. They demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the knowledge and information which is placed at their disposal to inform the decision-making process.

Inasmuch that most labour leaders have associated themselves with the democratic principles which apply to leadership and governance of an organization, they hold respect for the process of decision-making process which involves consultation. This has served the interest of the trade union organizations where leaders are known to respond to the will, wishes and directions of the membership. As the world becomes more immersed in a period of crisis, leaders who on becoming more in tune with the need to exercise decisive leadership, would come to recognize that they have to respond with greater alacrity.

It is during times of crisis that effective leadership is expected to come to the fore. It is then that leaders are expected to demonstrate that they are reflective, contemplative, considerate and analytical strategic thinkers. They are called upon in the exercise of their judgments to reflect the other important qualities such as vision, confidence, positivity, integrity, accountability, influence, empathy, humility and resilience. Decisive leaders require making difficult decisions. There is no guarantee that the right decision will always be made, and so it is something that one has to be prepared to accept. Decisive leaders can best accept any fallout from a decision which they have made, once they are satisfied that the decision was made on the best reliable information that was available at the time. One of the good qualities of the decisive leader is the ability to reflect and/or deliberate on the determined course of action to be executed. This is all about making a rational decision and not a senseless and irrational decision, that is not well thought through and is based purely on assumptions. Rational decisive action is premised on evidence or sound information.

Decisive leadership is not meant to be an excuse for the imposition of autocratic leadership. This can come about when and where there is an inflated ego. In spite of this leaders may assume that they have the last word and cannot be questioned, they should always be mindful that in an organizational structure where they are accountable to others, their authority can always be questioned. It is therefore advisable that decisive leaders don't resort to becoming overconfident by moving first to make decisions and asking questions thereafter. The best practice would also include evaluating and analyzing data and information and taking the time to consider the options, before arriving at a decision.