

Expectations of Prospective Leaders

In this age in which we live, the generation gap is often blamed for much of the disconnect that is experienced in the thinking, beliefs and actions of the younger members of the society. It is understandable that in an ever changing environment, people will have new perspectives and outlook. There is the high probability that the different experiences which present themselves, and the ways in which they are handled, are based on access to new information. To all intents and purposes, information plays a decisive role in informing and influencing how people think and respond. The importance and impact which information has on decision making, is reflected in the new approaches and strategies which are adopted and implemented.

The assumption can be made that young enthusiastic leaders may conceive of the idea, that a changing environment requires a radical reformation of practices, approaches, policies and systems. It is perponderous to advance the notion that change means effecting a radical overhaul. Those young leaders who share the view that strong hand tactics, vague threats and the implementation draconian measures are needed, ought to review the level of success that these bring.

Those who are so minded, easily run the risk of being accused as hasty, impulsive, irrational and insecure. There is nothing wrong with being enthusiastic, but there is everything wrong with decisions and actions that are not founded on sound assessments and reasoning. It is nauseating to have leaders who resort to nebulous reactions and impulsive behavior.

Irrespective of the generation gap, there are some aspects of leadership that cannot be ignored. At the top of the list is the expectation that leaders will inspire, motivate, win and maintain the confidence of those whom they lead. This is to be followed by good governance, in which the democratic principles are observed, Respect is shown for process and procedures, and the role and functions of individuals. It is not about the glamorization of an individual and ego building, and so it becomes disturbing when the pronoun 'I' becomes that of choice, instead of that of 'We.' Across all generations this has become a sore thumb, since it usually is the personal agenda of the leader that destroys the vision and retards the progress of the organization.

Some charismatic leaders genuinely have the ability to successfully lead. Most of such leaders seemingly understand how to win and maintain the confidence and respect of their members, and those with whom they have to interface.

The problem with some charismatic leaders is they suggest that they are knowledgeable about everything. They use their charm and guile to play on the emotions of people. They are hardly ever prepared to listen or take advice, generally perceive others as a threat to them, and more often than not, their judgments are clouded.

The important role which trade unions leaders are required to play, warrant that their actions don't lead to the creating of divisions within the organization. They ought not to find themselves in a position where they can be accused of creating adversarial relationships by attempting to micromanage, and/or disrespecting those with whom they are required to engage. They are to be warned against inappropriate actions that are likely to contribute to developing a hostile environment, as this tend to defeat the purpose of galvanizing the in-house support required; while at the same time burning their bridges both internally and externally.

The term 'fail leaders', may be best suited to those charismatic leaders who tend to hide behind the preverbal smoke screen, and whose actions or lack thereof, only serve to damage the image and reputation of the trade union.