



## Be a secure leader

High self esteem is the hallmark of good leaders; it comes from quality thinking that has produced positive results. Read on to know more about how to build self confidence & self esteem, become a better leader and make a difference to yourself, other people and add value to your organisation...

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**W**hen I first entered the Bridgeport's joint venture factory and took charge of it in South East Asia, what was visible to me was there existed a sense of insecurity among the people, including the then CEO deputed from Bridgeport. After all, the factory had existed for five years, and had never produced a single machine. In my first address, when I told them that building good machines was not only exciting but also easy to do, and that we were going to make it rain and have a ball, I must have looked like the dog that had seen the rainbow.

And I told them; I was the same dog that had seen the rainbow when I turned around Mysore Kirloskar from closure and this would be my second take, there was a glint of hope in their eyes and expectation written on their faces. I was able to make such statements because I felt absolutely sure and safe of successfully turning it around. Six months later history was rewritten. When a leader is secure, his confidence (like an infectious smile, excitement or enthusiasm), can 'infect' others around him, help them to succeed, be recognised and celebrate their successes.

### With a difference

Margaret Thatcher majored in Chemistry – a field dominated by men - from Oxford University, where she also became the first woman President of its Conservative Association. She then qualified as a lawyer and practised tax. She entered politics as an MP in 1959, which was a male-dominated profession. She was analytical, articulate and calm under difficult circumstances. Her party often asked her to face the opposition in debates. A discerning leader, she was the type who made up her own mind and did not follow the herd.

She held various government posts exhibiting her strong resolve and displaying high level of competence. She was also referred to as 'the most unpopular woman in Britain' when she was the secretary to the Education Department. She did not let this criticism affect her, instead she continued to work hard and gain the respect of people. Her reward was becoming Britain's first lady prime minister.

Ronald Reagan was a popular President. During one of his meetings in the White House with leaders of other nations, Pierre Trudeau the then prime minister of Canada was seen strongly reprimanding Thatcher.



Throughout the reprimand, she stood in front of Trudeau looking him in the eye. And, when Trudeau finished she just turned and walked away.

Others must have expected Thatcher to respond in defense. She did not. Reagan later told her, “Maggie, he should not have spoken to you like that. He was out of line, why did you let him get away with it?” She looked at Reagan and simply said, “A woman must know when a man is being simply childish.” This story characterises Margaret Thatcher. It sure takes a strong secure person to succeed as a world leader, especially when that person is a woman.

As the prime minister, she continued to face criticism for privatisation of state-owned industries, sending troops to Falkland Island, reducing the role of organised labour, for her conservative policies with Russia, etc. In the face of this onslaught of criticism she never lost nerve, she remained secure in her convictions and maintained her self-respect. She viewed consensus as abandoning beliefs, principles, values and policies in search of something that no one believes and in that no battle was won under the banner of consensus.

Thatcher, instead, stood for conviction in leadership, and was called the ‘Iron Lady’. She was the first British prime minister to be elected for three consecutive terms as its prime minister, a rare distinction. She never doubted herself or her beliefs. This is a true quality of exceptional leaders. No leader can remain one where he doubts himself, for when his success surpasses his security it will signal his downfall. Insecurity within a leader is



dangerous for his own self, those who follow him and the organisation he belongs to. To successfully lead others it is necessary for the leader to beat his negative baggage.

### Distinguishing them

How can we recognise insecure leaders? What are their common traits? Here are some qualities:

**They limit their best people:** When the *Nano* booking was announced, there were hoards of people who had thronged the Parsi Gymkhana in Mumbai. People were overly excited and eager to listen to Ratan Tata. He was their hero. They related the *Nano* only to Ratan Tata who had assured them some years ago, “A promise is a promise.” After all, he had kept his promise, and they love him for it. He was their shining star – the real *Bharat Ratna*. They came to see him and his dream.

After a few essential lines and announcing the numbers, Tata did something others did not expect. He invited the entire team that had successfully worked in developing the *Nano* led by Ravi Kant and gave away the limelight to them! These were the men who believed in that dream and toiled to fulfill that promise. This is the law of empowerment and the hallmark of a secure leader.

Secure leaders believe in others because they believe in themselves. When their people perform well, they do not feel threatened. Such leaders go out of their way to bring the best people together and build them up so that they will perform to their best potential. When a secure leader’s team succeeds, it brings him great joy, for he sees it as the highest compliment for his leadership ability. “No man will make a great leader who wants to do it all himself or get all the credit for doing it” - wrote industrialist, Andrew Carnegie.

An insecure leader is one who cannot celebrate his people’s victories. On the other hand, he may actually prevent his people from succeeding. Or, he might take credit for the success of his people or his team’s achievements. An insecure leader wishes to hoard power. Infact, the better his people are, the more he will feel threatened, and he will work harder to limit their success and recognition.

**They limit the organisation:** When the followers are either undermined or receive

no recognition, they get discouraged and stop to perform to their potential. Who bears the brunt of this? The organisation suffers.

**They do not give security to others:**

You cannot give what you do not have. One must have in surplus anything one wants to give. People who do not have the knowledge of a particular subject cannot impart that knowledge. A leader, who wants to become effective and wants others to follow him, needs to make his followers feel good about themselves.

**They take more from people and give back less:** Have you noticed insecure people, who continuously seek validation, who seek acknowledgement and feel the need to be loved. It is because of this trait, their focus is on finding security and not in giving it. Basically they are takers and not givers, and takers make lousy leaders.

Think about it and bring it home:

- ⦿ How well do you understand and respect yourself?
- ⦿ Do you know your strengths? Do you feel good about them?
- ⦿ Have you recognised your weaknesses? Have you accepted the ones you cannot change?
- ⦿ How secure are you when your follower has a great idea? Will you take an option out on it and make it succeed or will you suppress it?
- ⦿ When your team succeeds, do you give your people the credit and recognise them? Do you celebrate their victories?

If not you could be limiting your team and your organisation.

If you are the insecure type, here are three suggestions for you to change:

**Seek help:** You can seek professional help, or talk to a good psychologist. With his help, you can get to the root of your problem, both for the benefit of yourself and your organisation.



**Give away credit:** Simply said, 'What goes around comes back.' If you seek credit and recognition, first give it away. Acknowledge, praise and applaud the success of your team. When you lift their morale, help their careers and improve the organisation, it will make you look like an effective leader.

**Know yourself:** Learn about yourself. Read an extraordinary book called *Personality Plus* by Florence Littauer, or another by Peter Scot called *Simple Steps to Impossible Dreams*. Take a personality test as in those books. It is amazing how much you can learn about yourself.

You can ask people who know you well to tell you about your three greatest strengths or talents or skills, and three of your greatest weaknesses. Do not defend yourself. Gather the information, reflect on it and utilise it to improve yourself.

Try it, and you will benefit by becoming a better leader benefitting yourself and your organisation, creating better opportunities for growth. **MMT**



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