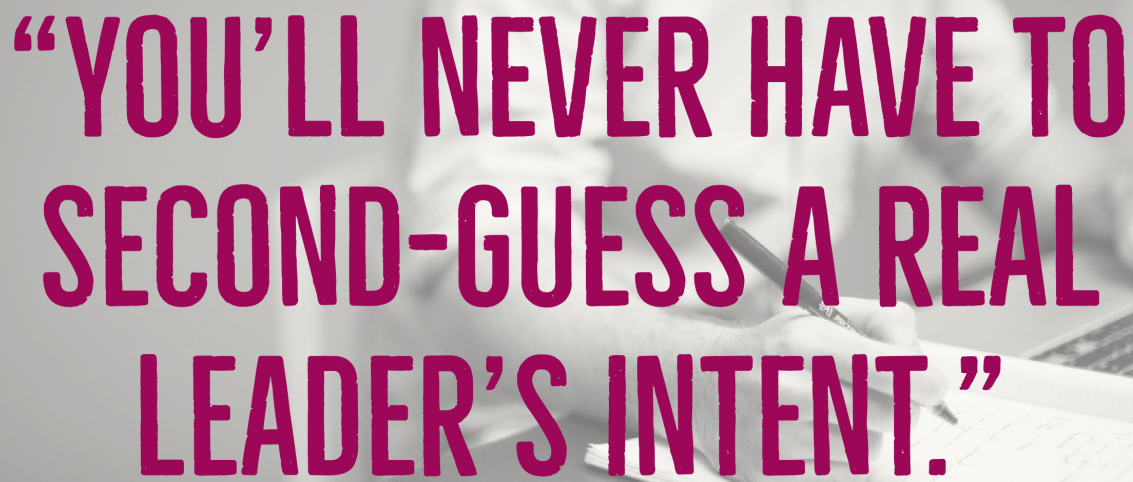


Leaders in name only



“YOU’LL NEVER HAVE TO
SECOND-GUESS A REAL
LEADER’S INTENT.”

- FRANK SONNENBERG

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Contributor, Frank Sonnenberg.

Some leaders are causing irreparable damage to great institutions by shirking their responsibilities. They’re afraid to address difficult issues, make tough decisions, and introduce the change that’s required to achieve long-term success. Instead, these “counterfeit leaders” spend much of their time playing politics, protecting their turf, and promoting their self-interests.

Are you a leader (in name only)? Leaders in name only take the easy road by accepting the status quo – even if they foresee difficult days ahead. They sidestep tough issues and kick the can down the road so that the day of reckoning falls on someone else’s watch.

Vision. On the other hand, real leaders are visionaries with a “can-do” attitude. They take on the impossible, while their timid colleagues look for the exits. In the process, real leaders confront issues and obstacles head-on and make decisions that position their organizations successfully for

the future. This means that their decisions won't always be popular, but they will be considered deliberate and fair; short-term results won't always be stellar, but long-term investments will secure a brighter future. These leaders won't always be loved, but they will be trusted and respected.

Do you take a strong stand? Leaders in name only evade decisions like the plague. They study problems, hire consultants, hide behind committees and task forces, and when in doubt, procrastinate – anything to shun accountability.

Conviction. Conversely, real leaders have a backbone. They make every effort to gather information, weigh alternatives, secure buy-in from their constituents, and determine the best course of action. Real leaders focus precious resources in areas that provide the greatest opportunity rather than trying to please everyone or making arbitrary, across-the-board decisions.

Where does the buck stop? Leaders in name only are masters at playing politics, finger-pointing, and finding others to shoulder the blame. They measure every action by protecting their turf and promoting their self-interests.

Humility. On the other hand, real leaders do what's right – period. Real leaders recognize that their stance represents something much larger than the whim of any one individual — as such, they put their egos and self-interests on hold. Real leaders do what's in the organization's best interest rather than trying to win a popularity contest, playing politics, or advancing their own private agenda.

Do you value integrity? Leaders in name only turn a blind eye to unethical behavior. To them, it's not how you play the game; it's all about winning. They believe that stepping on employees, squeezing vendors, or cheating a customer to make a quick sale is just the cost of doing business.

Integrity. On the contrary, real leaders operate with integrity at all times; they are passionate about protecting their personal integrity and the reputation of their organization. They understand that trust takes a long time to develop, but can be lost in the blink of an eye. Real leaders know that instilling a strong culture and promoting ethical core values are instrumental for success. In fact, in today's turbulent times, everything is subject to change except an organization's core values.

Are you building a legacy for others to follow? Leaders in name only focus all their efforts on short-term success – at the expense of the organization's future. Shortsighted leaders skimp on R&D, cut spending on capital equipment and new infrastructure, apply Band-Aid solutions to serious problems, and fail to develop key employees. Counterfeit leaders don't care about the future because they won't be rewarded for those efforts.

Credibility. On the other hand, real leaders maintain a balance between short-term performance and building a better future. Real leaders know that short-term wins enable leaders to build trust, instill confidence, and maintain momentum. This provides them with enough credibility to make strategic investments and tackle the long-term challenges that ensure success. Real leaders understand the importance of motivating others to accept personal sacrifice to benefit others.

Are You Up to the Job?

Real leaders achieve success by setting the bar high, encouraging teamwork, promoting win-win relationships, and demanding everyone's best effort. Real leaders win the support of their constituents by earning their trust and respect. This is achieved through powerful ideas, personal expertise, and impeccable integrity rather than through their position or by "pulling rank."

Real leaders set the tone from the top. In so doing, decisions are never made to win a popularity contest or to placate everyone by being all things to all people. Precious resources are allocated in areas where they provide the greatest good while carefully balancing short-term performance with long-term success. And, while you may not always agree with a real leader's decision, you'll always know that every decision was made in an honest, fair, and objective fashion. You'll never have to second-guess a real leader's intent; you'll know what he or she stands for.

All great leaders, whether in the public or private sector, make people feel proud of the institution they represent and realistic about the future. When a real leader promotes a common end, people begin to work as a team rather than at cross-purposes with one another. Self-interests wind up on the backburner, while individuals begin working together for a higher purpose – the common good. And that, my friend, is what real leadership is all about.

For more information on how to be a good leader, [click here](#).



Frank is an award-winning author. He has written five books and over 300 articles. Frank was recently named one of "America's Top 100 Thought Leaders" and nominated as one of "America's Most Influential Small Business Experts." Frank has served on several boards and has consulted to some of the largest and most respected companies in the world. Additionally, FrankSonnenbergOnline was named among the "Best 21st Century Leadership Blogs" and among the "Top 100 Socially-Shared Leadership Blogs." Frank's new book, Follow Your Conscience, was released November 2014. © 2016 Frank Sonnenberg. All rights reserved.

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