

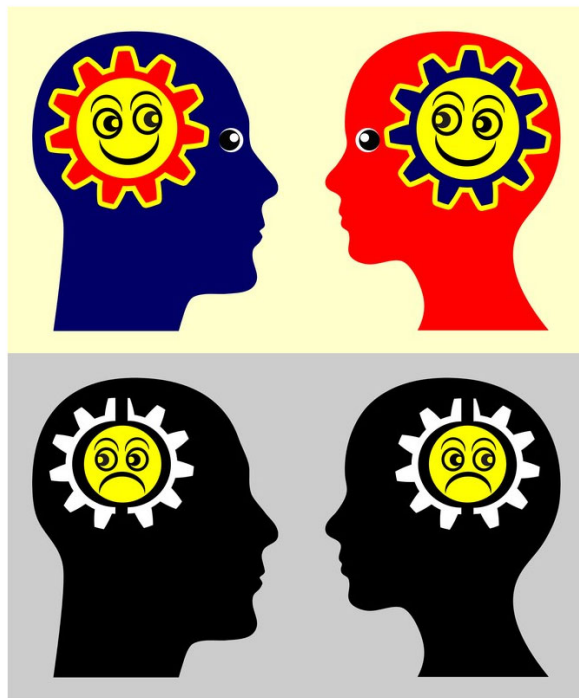


OCTOBER 24, 2018



Good Leadership is Contagious. So is Bad Leadership.

It's flu season. At this time of year, most of us alter our behavior a bit to avoid "catching" anything that might be contagious. But how many of us are on the lookout for contagious **behavior**? Do we "catch" certain behaviors from those around us?



Social Contagion

Research by UC San Diego's James Fowler and Harvard's Nicholas Christakis has shown that many behaviors are, indeed, "catching." Their research showed that if you have overweight friends, you're more likely to be overweight. If you quit smoking, your friends are more likely to quit. Rose McDermott of Brown University even found that divorce is contagious: if you have a close friend who's divorced, you are 33% more likely to split with your spouse.

We know that good leadership creates engaged employees and that good leaders have a major impact on retention,

productivity, job satisfaction, and so on. But if you're a good leader, do the people around you "catch" that behavior and become good leaders, too? And which behaviors are most readily "caught"?

In [*The Trickle-Down Effect of Good \(and Bad\) Leadership*](#), Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman found significant correlations between the behaviors of high-level (HL) managers and their mid-level (ML) direct reports. In a test of 265 matching pairs of HL and ML managers, they tested 51 specific behaviors. Their results indicated that some

behaviors were significantly more contagious than others. The following list ranks the 8 behaviors with the highest correlations between managers and their direct reports:

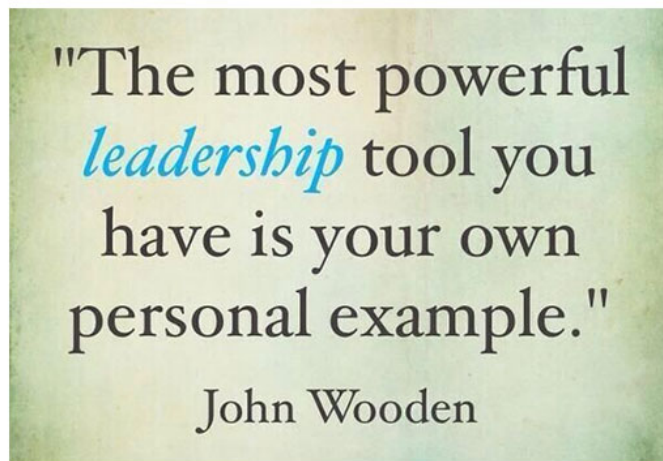
- Developing self and others
- Technical skills
- Strategy skills
- Consideration and cooperation
- Integrity and honesty
- Global perspective
- Decisiveness
- Results focus

The “Trickle-Down” Effect

Zenger and Folkman found that the best-performing leaders had the best-performing direct reports, and vice versa. To determine the impact on the organization as a whole, they used a 360-degree feedback instrument to question

subordinates about their own level of engagement. The results were sobering. “HL managers whose overall leadership effectiveness was in the top 10% had direct reports (MLs) whose engagement scores were in the 81st percentile, and the subordinates of these ML managers had engagement scores

in the 74th percentile. Those whose overall leadership effectiveness was in the bottom 10% had direct reports (MLs) whose engagement scores were in the 15th percentile, and the direct reports of those ML managers had engagement scores in the 24th percentile.” In other words, managers doing a sub-par job erode not only the engagement of their direct reports, they also drag down the engagement of the people working for them, too.



“Sometimes leaders wonder whether they are making an impact. Struggling to see the impact we are having on others is typical, as the influence is subtle and occurs over time. Hopefully, this research demonstrates that leaders’ impact is greater than they might have suspected. You really do make a difference.”

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