

**"Building Beyond Basics"**

## **Leadership in small to mid size companies: its important to do it consciously!**

Every one of us uses leadership skills every day, whether at home, in the community or at work. Somewhere, someone is watching you, emulating you, learning from you **or working for you**. Born leaders are actually rare, for everyone else, it is hard work but well worth it. If you are a leader in your own company or managing a team, you are missing a golden opportunity if you don't lead consciously!

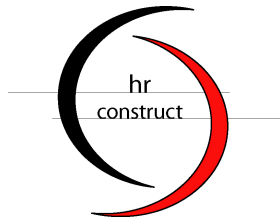
There are many theories and much writing on the topic of what makes a good leader, and the differences between managing and leading. The literature covers lists of characteristics that include things like Guiding Vision, Passion, People Skills, Drive, Charisma – and many more. But there is one thing, in my experience, that great leaders have in common, and that is, a strong set of core values with Integrity topping the list.

Never thought about it?  
Understanding your core values and ensuring they align with your company's is important. The next step is to clearly communicate them by 'living' them in your

deeds, words and expectations of others.

Doing this will deliver:

1. **Improved Partnerships**  
People know what to expect and can depend on your actions and reactions. They will take initiative.
2. **Improved alignment of people and business goals**  
Make sure your people are headed in a direction that is compatible with your company's values; it makes for a much more satisfying, less complicated experience. You won't be wondering why people don't 'get it'.
3. **Improved Decision Making**  
If your decisions are based on core values, they are easier for you to make and more consistent and clear to all those around you.
4. **Improved Communications**  
Clarity is one of the keys to a business that runs like a well-oiled machine. Communicating roles and goals clearly, can mean improved customer satisfaction and teamwork. Over time, people who work for you will actually anticipate decisions and make them for you in a way that you can approve. You



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5. can delegate without concern.
6. **A motivate team; you and others**  
When work is easier and you are having fun you just want to do more of it – and it's catching!

Why bother doing this?  
Strong leadership and strong culture facilitate organizational clarity and motivate people. They also provide the guiding principles for how people work and "people program designs". Studies have established that as much as 15% of a company's profitability and performance comes from the people strategy and that the associated human resources programs can affect the probability of start up survival by as much as 22%.

Many business owners will wait to develop the kind of programs that promote leadership at all levels in the organization because it seems like too much infrastructure and well, it just seems like you shouldn't have to until you get "bigger" and life becomes more complex. The reality is that the sooner you start, the easier it is to build and the less complex it is to install. You may have a little more structure but your leadership life will become much simpler.

## **It's time!**

If you own a business, you and your management team are influencing everyone you interact with including customers, bank managers, suppliers, shareholders and employees. If you want to be successful, you need to strive for conscious competence.

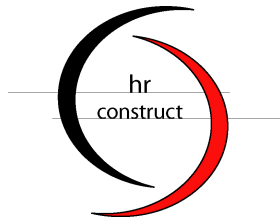
If you're doing it anyway, why not do it well and use it to your advantage?

## **Recruitment**

Hiring people that share your values makes it a place where everyone likes to work. Designing HR programs that support, reward and reinforce the behaviours that demonstrate the values is key to sustaining that environment. In other words, people who take action and make decisions that are consistent with the values are the ones you pay well, reward, spend valuable training dollars on and KEEP.

## **Retention**

The word "KEEP" is very important here. Over time, not only will you hire people that have similar values, you will help those who don't, find other opportunities.



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This is important because it clearly and consistently demonstrates the importance your company places on how people work together and work with customers or suppliers.

### **Competitive Advantage**

Early stage companies have an opportunity to create competitive advantage when the leadership develops a values based culture. Once identified, the core values can become the basis for creating an environment that embodies everything that is important to you and your business.

Things like teamwork, customer focus, excellent communications, drive to win, and integrity, all become much easier to define in terms of what is **acceptable** and what is **exceptional** behaviour and performance.

Let's face it; potentially impacting your profitability by as much as 15% is nothing to sniff at!

**Gay Miller** is the Founder of **HR Construct**, a human resources consulting organization. As Principle Architect, her leadership brings together a group of specialists that provide full service HR support to small and mid-sized companies.



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