

## **Leadership Is A Privilege, Not An Entitlement**

### **Learn The Difference In Order To Make A Difference Relationship**

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Much has been said about the entitlement mindset of specific demographics within our society. However, this mindset isn't exclusive to any one slice of our population. Indeed, this mindset of entitlement is prominently displayed by children and adults of all generations, social stratum, and geographies. Yet, within that mix of diversity emerges an indisputable commonality. That commonality being: Leaders behaving as if they are entitled to the position they hold.

In the arena of leadership, the entitlement mindset is very much alive and well – and debilitating. Far too many leaders suffer and struggle with the misconception that leadership and entitlement are, in fact, synonyms.

Leadership is a privilege, not an entitlement. Those on whom this distinction is lost are most prone to abuse the privilege of leadership and to punish those within their sphere of influence. The punishment often shows up in the form of an uninspiring vision, an inexact mission, ambiguous expectations, and pitiful execution of accountability. In an environment beset by entitled leadership, it becomes painfully evident that the leader is in it for personal gain, fame, and glory above all else.

In a slight twist on the theme, there are those who believe they are "entitled" to a particular role or position simply because of their tenure, relationship, or education. As the would-be "victim" tells his or her plight in the break room, the story sounds righteous and noble, and many of the listeners are sympathetic. However, the teller of the tale fails to address that fact that his or her interpersonal skills are atrocious, their reputation is tainted, and they lack true ambition and initiative. Nonetheless, they believe they are "entitled" to the open leadership position. Clearly this is an entitlement mindset, and it doesn't bode well for the individual or the team.

When I think of the privilege of leadership, I think of highly capable and talent individuals voluntarily agreeing to grant me their cooperation, collaboration, and to accept me as their leader. These individuals are literally granting me their permission to lead them. As such, it is a privilege I shouldn't take lightly nor abuse, neglect, or disrespect. Frankly, I have a responsibility to work just as hard on my leadership skills, if not harder, than I expect my direct reports to work on the skills of their individual trades and disciplines. To do anything less would be irresponsible. It would be the very evidence of abusing the privilege.

Privileges are inextricable tied to responsibility. To miss this point is only to prove you are not ready to handle the privilege. The privilege of an academic scholarship has attached to it the responsibility of course attendance, study, and passing grades. The privilege of driving an automobile has associated with it the responsibility of mastering a set of skills and abiding by the traffic laws. The same is true of the privilege of leadership. The privilege of leadership comes with a long and demanding list of responsibilities. If you aren't able or willing to fulfill the responsibilities, then you aren't ready to step into the privilege of leadership.

Make no mistake, the attitude or orientation of entitlement versus a privilege orientation is important and critical to your success as a leader. Entitled leaders are often the source of high absenteeism, high turnover, and low productivity. Conversely, leaders who grasp the importance of being grateful, appreciative, and respectful of the privilege to lead tend to create and promote cultures that produce higher levels of engagement, inclusion, and favorable results. Simply stated, an entitlement mentality nullifies the motivation to do the hard work to prepare for and rightfully contend for the coveted opportunity to lead.

Those who flaunt the banner of entitlement based on tenure instead of track record, degrees instead of demonstrated competence, or a relationship with the decision maker instead of relevant skills and competence, are broadcasting to the world just how unfit and ill-suited they actually are for the role.

If you haven't prepared yourself for the demands and rigors of the next level of leadership, how and why should you expect to be entrusted with that kind of responsibility? Indisputably, leadership is best understood as a privilege, instead of an entitlement.

**Leadership Lesson:** We've all met them, and been ambushed by their story of woe. The individuals who claim to be entitled to a position of leadership based on their tenure, education, or their relationship with a decision maker. But leadership is not about entitlement, instead leadership is a privilege. Those who understand this truth tend to create cultures characterized by higher levels of engagement, inclusion, and results.

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