

How to earn respect: Set a good example!

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Do you have the impression that respect is a thing of the past? Not so long ago, people still felt duty-bound to respect doctors, fathers, policemen or bosses.

In recent years, as the younger generations (Y, Z) have come onto the labour market, and especially with the political and financial scandals that have hit the headlines, the scale of individual and societal values has changed.

How do you earn the respect of other people, your employees, partners, colleagues?
These thoughts are equally applicable in the private sphere, with your children and friends.

Continuing our journey ("Leadership: Why don't we have the impact we would like?"), let's consider for a moment one of the expectations employees have of a good boss: they expect him or her to set a good example.

Definition

An example (model) is the image of something ideal, real or virtual, present or past. This image, admired by the individual, has a lasting influence on his/her development and way of life.

But setting an example also means giving others guidance through one's personality and actions, and consequently being seen as exemplary. In other words: you don't set yourself up as an example; you are seen as one by others.

Managers automatically serve as examples – good or bad – because their behaviour gives guidance and exerts a lasting influence.

So please note: a manager is raised to the position of leader by his or her employees when they follow him/her willingly.

Quotation

"It is always easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them."
(Alfred Adler, 1870-1937)

The factors that cause others to respect me are as follows:

1. The **meaning** that I bring to my actions and activities (my vision and my values: see my earlier articles)
2. The **discipline (strength of character)** with which I stick to my values (I do what I say!); I take a very clear line. The correspondence/harmony between my values and the example I set is known as "integrity".
3. The fact that I **keep my promises**. This is the golden rule when it comes to setting an example. My children are the first to point it out to me. It is an interesting fact that we often make promises without being aware of it. You don't have to say "I promise you that..." for it to be a promise. If I say to a

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colleague: "Tomorrow I'll give you that report", that's already a promise. We need to be more aware of what we say and act accordingly. If we find that we can't fulfil a promise, we should immediately inform the person(s) concerned, and set a new deadline.

4. Being **consistent**. Don't do to others what you would not want them to do to you. If I fail to show respect to other people, why should others show me respect, whatever their age, even if they are my children? For example, if someone speaks ill of others or behind their backs, how will they speak about you when you are not there? Will you trust them? Will that help you respect them?
5. My **authenticity and sincerity (what I do and say)**. Be yourself!

The notions of respect and setting an example are interdependent. Experience has taught me that by giving meaning, taking a clear line, being disciplined and authentic, and keeping promises, I earn the respect of my children, my employees, colleagues and superiors. Regardless of what generation they belong to!

To conclude, here are a few additional statements for you to think about:

- I think I am sincere in the way I behave.
- I see myself as a person of integrity.
- My employees and colleagues are always able to predict my reactions (whatever the situation).
- The way I behave is a source of inspiration for my team and my colleagues.

Set a good example: take the first step and be the first to show respect!

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