

Why Great Leaders Are Perpetual Learners

By Ann N. Gatty, Ph.D.



Great leaders are perpetual learners. In other words, they are individuals who rely on their insatiable appetite to learn. Learning, for them, is as natural as breathing. Always curious and experimenting with possibilities, these individuals have made their mark on our business enterprises in the past and will continue to do so in the future. Steve Jobs, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and the Wright brothers come to mind. They learned from others and continuously experimented to find solutions to challenges before them.

However, leadership is not limited to inventions. Leadership also includes the influential relationship that one has with others. By being perpetual learners, these great leaders are capable of considering and implementing fresh ideas that come from others. Here are three attitudes that great leaders hold as perpetual learners.

Curiosity is an asset

According to Simon Sinek, the British/American author, motivational speaker and marketing consultant, great leaders are always learning. They keep open mind to consider new ideas. They shy away from considering themselves as experts, because thinking of themselves as experts, limits the consideration of new possibilities. Also, being curious raises awareness to possibilities for improvements. Isn't it the responsibility of a leader to keep the organization moving forward? The world is continuously changing. What worked yesterday is irrelevant to solve a current situation. Change is not the enemy of a business, but a constant part of the process.

New options are refreshing

Zen master Shunryu Suzuki is the author of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. In this book there is a powerful message that applies to today's leaders. He describes the importance of having a "beginner's mind. By this he means that a beginner's mind is a simple, pure mind open to possibilities., As humans, we feel a sense of accomplishment for accumulating high levels of information. However, beware of such thoughts that shut down future curiosity and prevent future continuous learning and seeing wide perspectives.

Having a beginner's mind allows one to see things fresh and new, with many possibilities. New options are revealed just because the leader is willing to try things differently without preconceived judgements. Since the business world is continuously changing, a great leader has a better chance of continued success by being willing to consider new options.

Outside perspectives are a valuable resource.

Great leaders learn from many different sources. Learning what strategies work in one industry can become a transferable application in another. Leaders who rely on previous success strategies and voices from within their organizations are limiting their options for business growth, renewal or the opportunities to pivot to new



markets. As I consider my colleagues with whom I work, I notice that they all have one thing in common. They all have mentors, coaches, and strategic partners from whom they continue to learn and grow. We can't be experts in everything, and there is always room for improvement in our professional and personal lives.

Continuous improvement cannot happen in a vacuum. Being motivated to step outside your comfort zone to try and master new strategies, tactics and relationships happens only when you have someone walking along beside you. Great leaders are not afraid to consider outside perspectives and embrace those ideas that can continue to move their businesses forward in a healthy progression.

So, in summary, great leaders are insatiable learners who enjoy having conversations with others to gain outside perspectives. They relish the opportunities to try new options to solve challenging dilemmas and find it gratifying when they find new innovative ways to move forward.

About the Author

Dr. Ann Gatty is a business success expert. She helps her clients clarify the vision for their businesses, boost their leadership capabilities and add quality talent to help the clients reach their goals. Through a collaborative mentoring process, she and her clients create workable strategic business plans and success initiatives, while improving their workplace processes. She is frequently featured in the media and contributes blog posts for www.AllBusiness.com, www.MarketingInsiders.com, and www.WomenOnBusiness.com. Her interactive speaking engagements assist participants in discovering new-found talents and skills that they can immediately apply in the workplace. Join her [Facebook Group, Strategic Thinking Summit Elites](#) for strategies you can implement to grow your business success and enjoy camaraderie with others entrepreneur members.