

Leadership

by Tim Marriner

Leadership is an art that is used to influence (not dictate) the thoughts and actions of others. The secret of successful leadership is sometimes identified as the ability to lead people in the direction they wish to go. Leadership is an acquirable skill – it can be learned. Leaders are not born, they are made. They come into being by three ways; appointment, election, or emerge out of need. Not everyone is an effective leader.

Volunteers are hard to fire but if non-effective leaders are allowed to remain in office, the demise of the organization is a sure thing. Egos can swell out of proportion and impair the sight and hearing of those afflicted. Many clubs and organizations have folded due to struggles over leadership. The fact still remains that many people working together can accomplish more than the same people working separately. It takes a leader to bring all these people together and guide them in the proper direction.

People tend to support decisions they feel involved in making; therefore, better results will occur if decisions are more democratic than authoritarian. A “laissez faire” approach implying to just wait and see what happens is the least effective style of leadership.

Three things are necessary and vitally needed to make sound decisions – education, experience, and authority. Leadership effectiveness requires goal setting, implementation, feedback, and evaluation. Within organization there are three types of people, those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happens. Once a plan of action has been developed, it must be organized in such a manner as to enable it to be implemented. The leader must then direct the dancers or committees to accomplish the required tasks. Management is a skill needed to guide and direct the operations of any group, club, or organization.

The leadership role comes automatically once you step onto the calling stage. Like it or not people watch and react to your dress, speech, language, behavior, dancing and many other things. You are now a role model for the activity. Set the example!

Here are a few basic principals: Do followers know what they are supposed to do? If not, redefine the goals and provide guidelines. Have they done it before? If not, coach them. Tell them. Show them. Do it with them. Provide an atmosphere for self-motivation. Do they know how they are doing? If not, provide feedback. Observe, praise, and reprimand if necessary.

Nobody said leadership was easy. It takes work. Callers need to recognize the inevitability of the leadership role, accept it, and resolve to do the best job possible for the good of square dancing.