



Lead without Title: Sway your Colleagues

Overview

The words “Manager” and “Leader” are often used interchangeably -- but there’s a big difference. In the hierarchy of the workplace, managers typically have responsibility for other people and have titles like “Manager,” “Supervisor,” and “Director.” But anyone can be a leader, regardless of title -- and some people with impressive titles like “president” and “CEO” may not be very effective at leadership. But how exactly do you lead without a title and the official stamp of authority the title implies? And as a relatively young or junior employee, can you act as a leader and still keep your job?

The answer is absolutely yes, if you are thoughtful about your approach.

Directions

You work for SkillMaze, which designs applications that teach teens how to develop video games. The latest app is specifically designed to attract kids who aren’t hardcore gamers. You love the concept but some of the graphics just seem wrong to you, even objectionable. In fact, you’re sure they could turn off the very users the software is designed to reach. You briefly raised your concerns at a meeting but no one seemed to hear you. Everyone on the team is older than you and has worked together for years. You’re tempted to let the issue go but you know that changing the graphics will make the product stronger, more inclusive, and ultimately, more successful.

It’s time to step up and demonstrate leadership -- but you need a plan. Explain the steps you will take to persuade your colleagues to revisit the graphics. Be sure to include a rationale for each step.

Once you have the plan, record yourself:

- 1) Enlisting the help of someone more senior at the company
- 2) Clearly articulating the issue to your teammates and persuading them to act

Each recording should be under 1 minute and can be audio alone or video.

Rubric

| Criterion | Description | Yes | Not Yet |
|---|---|-----|---------|
| Plan is clear and includes convincing rationales | <i>You have thought through what you are going to do and why</i> | | |
| Recording to senior colleague explains clearly and persuasively the issue and need for action | <i>You show how to get powerful allies</i> | | |
| Demonstrates ability to ask senior colleague for advice and support | <i>You are both respectful and strong</i> | | |
| Demonstrates ability to speak up with teammates | <i>You explain the issue without apologizing or going overboard</i> | | |
| Demonstrates ability to persuade teammates by appealing to values and long-term goals | <i>You explain why this is important for the company, not just to you</i> | | |