

# LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP *with Fusi Akinkugbe*

## Inspire, Influence, Enable: How leaders lead

**E**ffective leaders have the capacity to do what is required to achieve a particular purpose. How do they do this? By inspiring those who follow them to buy into the purpose, influencing them to make the changes required to execute it, and empowering them to work towards its successful attainment. These three: *Inspire, Influence and Enable* are how leaders lead. Let's look at them:

### Inspire

When you inspire, you ignite a fire in someone that makes them want to achieve a new level in productivity, performance or quality of life. Inspiration moves people to achieve the group's purpose or goal, ensuring they buy into it so they can continue towards it on their own. If you have to force people to do things or go along with you, then they have not been inspired nor convinced.

But how do leaders inspire? Inspiring others towards a purpose could be by setting out a vision or setting new standards to be attained and then creating the hope that this can be achieved.

*Three things will help you inspire others as a leader:*

a. *You must have strong convictions about the future or destination you are setting before others.* How can you inspire others about a new level you want everyone to attain if you don't believe in it? While no one can claim to have any guarantees about the future, you cannot take others to a destination which

you are not convinced will become a reality.

b. *Secondly, you must be able to frame a future that does not yet exist. Even if you are convinced about a new future, you must be able to communicate it so others can be convinced.* This is what happens in difficult circumstances, when leaders give their people hope that the present situation won't define the future and they do this by presenting a different future as the logical end of the current predicament. In Nigeria's present situation, perhaps one thing that is seriously lacking is that no one has framed a future that is more desirable yet possible for us as a people. The result is that we have nothing to inspire us. Nothing to look forward to. Former British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill framed a different future for his people in a time of difficulty. At the beginning of World War 2, things looked bleak for Britain, but Churchill replaced the uncertainty with a positive interpretation of the circumstances. He interpreted the situation not based on what it looked like (that Britain could be run over by her enemies), but rather what he had conviction could realistically happen. This gave people hope, and he did it without denying the reality of the situation or encouraging delusion. While inspiration presents the possibility of a new reality, it does not deny reality.

c. *Thirdly you must be able to let those you lead believe they have the ability to attain a higher level. People can only be motivated*

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*to do something if they believe they can achieve it.* A leader must make people believe in themselves. Sir Alex Ferguson, former Manager of Manchester United Football Club, said his job "was to make everyone understand that the impossible was possible". He inspired his players by making them believe they could achieve the impossible.

### Influence

Once people are inspired it is possible to influence them. They are first inspired to join you in achieving a purpose, and then as a result of being inspired, they can be influenced to make necessary adjust-

ments in themselves such as developing themselves, changing their conduct or sacrificing something. Once inspired, they will take ownership of the vision and take action individually.

Influence works when you are able to make a positive effect on the character and behaviour of others without needing to resort to any authority you may have over them. To lead therefore, you must influence people because they have a choice: to freely do what you would like them to, or not. If you cannot influence people, you will never get their genuine commitment. They will do things only because they have to and not because they want to. In the words of leadership teacher John Maxwell: *'Leadership is Influence - nothing more, nothing less.'*

### Enable

The third thing is that leaders enable. An effective leader must be able to empower or enable others. This means providing them with the means and opportunities to achieve the purpose or goal of the organisation, and also become the best they can be.

In the process of enabling others though, something can happen: the people you enable can become 'greater' than you. Some leaders cannot accept this and work to prevent it. But if enabling others involves allowing them to fulfil their potential, why then are we afraid of their success even if they are our subordinates? Does leadership mean we persistently remain in authority over people? The reason for wanting to limit others' success

(especially subordinates) is often attributable to the insecurity of leaders.

To enable others, you must be secure in who you are. John Maxwell says: *"You can't lead people if you need people."* A true leader does not need people's validation, nor does he need them to prop him up. Unfortunately, many leaders need people to prop up their egos and validate them. If you don't enable people, they will either give up (even though they remain in the organisation) or leave and go where they will be enabled.

**Are you ready to inspire, influence and lead?**

Thank you and until next week, let me challenge you to begin to lead from where you are.



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