

LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP *with Fusi Akinkugbe*

Welcome to 'Lessons in Leadership'

Welcome to 'Lessons in Leadership', a weekly leadership column in which I will be sharing knowledge and insight to help you lead wherever you are

I am sure you will agree with me that the need for leadership today is as great as it has ever been, if not greater. Look at our world: there is political turbulence, financial turmoil, economic uncertainty and disruption due to technology. All these are happening in the context of different global challenges, most notable of which is the Coronavirus pandemic which has in every country, led to problems not seen before in our lifetime. These things have collectively put pressure on leaders across the world to step up to the plate. It is clear that leaders have their work cut out for them. And what about in our country today? The need for leadership at every level has never been clearer.

Now you might say that how does all this concern you since you are not in a leadership position of any kind. It may be true that you are not in a leadership position, but contrary to what you may think, wherever you are, you have the capacity to influence others and make a difference. The reality is that for us to see the changes we all desire, leadership is needed not only from those in leadership positions in the private and public sectors, but also from you and I because we can make a difference right where we are.

What can you expect from this column?

The aim of this column is to give us knowledge and insight about leadership, and to provide actionable steps and tools so we can put what we learn into practice. This column will address different issues such as: *Why Leadership matters; How leaders lead; Authority and Power, How to build influence and The fundamental requirements for effective leadership* among others. We will also be looking at practical issues that impact our leadership. For example, when you are faced with taking a difficult step will you have the courage to do so? Are you ready to invest what it takes to attain the competence required of you in your area of endeavour? What do you do when you have to make a choice – for example between what is right or what is expedient?

People often ask the question: "Are leaders are born or made?". I think this is a question we all want answered because we would like to know how we can become leaders if we don't have the natural gifts and abilities some leaders seem to have. Let me answer this by looking to someone who is an authority on the subject: Doris Kearns Goodwin is an American Presidential Historian and in her recent book titled *Leadership in Turbulent Times*, she chronicled the leadership of four former US Presidents. She said of all four of them that: "With perseverance and hard work, they all es-

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entially made themselves leaders by enhancing and developing the qualities they were given." These four leaders were able to live up to the demands of what is acknowledged as the highest office, by developing themselves accordingly.

In a similar vein, leadership experts James Kouzes and Barry Posner have conducted research on leadership for over three decades, and in their best-selling book *The Leadership Challenge* they say that when it comes to leadership, the myth that "some people have it and some don't" or that it can't be

learned is far from the actual truth they have found in their research. In fact, they assert that "leadership is an identifiable set of skills that are available to anyone."

So, it is possible to become a leader even if you don't seem to possess natural leadership gifts and abilities. Definitely not everyone will attain to important leadership positions, but this is proof that if we are ready to make the investment, we can each be the best we can. So, I believe that anyone aspiring to leadership in any capacity will benefit from resources and material that provide instruction and guidance in leadership development. This is the aim of this column. I will draw on the examples of well-known leaders from different parts of the world and from different walks of life. Successful leaders are not perfect but rather, they are people who have overcome innumerable odds to make a positive impact on the lives of people and the situations that affect them.

On a lighter note, I am unfortunately not going to tell you ten steps to becoming a millionaire or how to get rich quickly, but if you are ready to put in the work and the discipline required, you will learn how you can be an influence in your immediate environment and beyond and play a part in changing your world. Everyone deep down wants to be significant, to genuinely make impact in some way, but sadly many have unfortunately

come to regret the priorities they had and the things they chased after. They discover when it is too late that making somebody else's life more meaningful is what would have made theirs truly have meaning.

If we don't live for a purpose greater than ourselves, then our existence is limited only to ourselves, and how sad and small that would be.

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



Akinkugbe qualified as a Chartered Accountant. He served as treasury controller at DHL and later as CEO of a technology services company founded by Accenture.