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LEADERS & SUCCESS

IBD'S 10 SECRETS TO SUCCESS

Investor's Business Daily has spent years analyzing leaders and successful people in all walks of life. Most have 10 traits that, when combined, can turn dreams into reality. Each day, we highlight one.

- 1 HOW YOU THINK IS EVERYTHING:** Always be positive. Think success, not failure. Beware of a negative environment.
- 2 DECIDE UPON YOUR TRUE DREAMS AND GOALS:** Write down your specific goals and develop a plan to reach them.
- 3 TAKE ACTION:** Goals are nothing without action. Don't be afraid to get started. Just do it.
- 4 NEVER STOP LEARNING:** Go back to school or read books. Get training and acquire skills.
- 5 BE PERSISTENT AND WORK HARD:** Success is a marathon, not a sprint. Never give up.
- 6 LEARN TO ANALYZE DETAILS:** Get all the facts, all the input. Learn from your mistakes.
- 7 FOCUS YOUR TIME AND MONEY:** Don't let other people or things distract you.
- 8 DON'T BE AFRAID TO INNOVATE; BE DIFFERENT:** Following the herd is a sure way to mediocrity.
- 9 DEAL AND COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE EFFECTIVELY:** No person is an island. Learn to understand and motivate others.
- 10 BE HONEST AND DEPENDABLE; TAKE RESPONSIBILITY:** Otherwise, Nos. 1-9 won't matter.

Tailoring Your Message

9 A memo to CEOs and managers: Stay on message and actively shape it, or your troops will shape it for you.

Case in point: a new strategy. The CEO launches it with great fanfare. He communicates powerfully. Everyone is energized.

Over time he faces other demands, and the strategy shifts to automatic pilot. Managers go through the motions. Communication channels dry up.

Employees want updates, but they're left in the dark. Workers start filling in the gaps with rumors. Productivity weakens. The strategy slowly veers off course.

This can be avoided by communicating consistently, says executive coach **Pamela Harper**, author of **"Preventing Strategic Gridlock."**

"There's a big difference between transmitting information and communicating credibly" and consis-

tently, she said. "While the former may get your messages across, the latter builds on them so they get the results you want. This requires a concentrated effort over the long haul."

Harper suggests these tips to keep your team focused and your strategy on track:

■ Forget the one-size-fits-all model. Shape your message to the needs of different stakeholders — not just vendors and investors, but also company divisions and departments. The goals of one department differ from another. By tailoring your message to local interests, you'll promote buy-in across the board, says **Harper**, who advises executives from entrepreneurs to Fortune 500 management teams.

■ Communicate often. "Spreading information over multiple memos, meetings and other channels reinforces the message and strengthens the stakeholders' sense of being kept in the loop," she said.

■ Meet expectations. If you promise weekly or monthly updates, always deliver. "If you have to change how and when you communicate, let stakeholders know," said **Harper**, who heads **Glen Rock, N.J. - based Business Advancement Inc.**

"When you have to limit your communication about a strategy or initiative for confidentiality or other business reasons, say so

and provide a realistic time frame for when you'll be able to communicate more fully."

■ Keep it real. "The more people can link your communication to what they perceive as reality," **Harper** said, "the more likely they'll be to trust future messages."

■ Draft a plan to communicate strategies and initiatives. Include ways to measure your effectiveness with each audience, whether communications are being understood and the degree to which messages are perceived as credible. Methods include question-and-answer sessions, surveys and "observing how the constituent groups actually behave," she said.

"A company that was integrating divisions put a plan in place that included kick-off sessions between executives and their reports, frequently asked questions and answers on bulletin boards, and one-on-one sessions between executives and each employee in their group."

■ Test the waters. Ask these questions about a strategy in progress, **Harper** urges: "How effective are our communication channels?" "How do we know?" "What other channels could better serve our needs?" "What could we do right now to boost worker involvement?"

Cord Cooper

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For more information, contact Pamela S. Harper, Business Advancement Inc. at (201) 612-1228 Eastern, or email: pharper@businessadvance.com