



The POE as Role Model

You Can't Avoid It... So Are You a Good or Bad Role Model?

January 2022

How often do you, as the Principal, Owner or Executive (POE) of your company, think about your influence on virtually everyone in your organization? Consider the following:

Your Actions

Everything you say

Everything you do

Your reaction

Your willingness to confront

Holding yourself & others accountable

Your Inactions

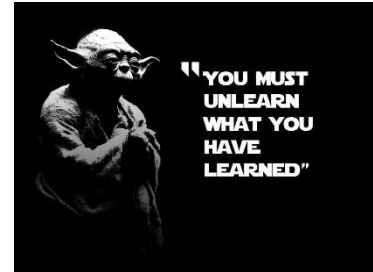
Everything you don't say

Everything you don't do

Your lack of reaction

Your unwillingness to confront

Not holding yourself & others accountable



Your messages are received, internalized, evaluated and acted upon by each and every employee, vendor, prospect, client, and partner each hour of every day. Everything you do and say significantly influences not just your employees, but also your spouse, children, parents, neighbors, friends and even complete strangers. This is the human condition and **the only thing you can really control is what kind of role model or leader you decide to be.**

Deciding on what kind of leader or role model you want to be is just the first step. It's the easy part. Creating that persona, developing those traits, displaying those habits, and living those values is extremely hard. Positive role models (and leaders) are not born, they are made. To become a valuable, respected, trusted and emulated role model, you will have to actually allocate time, money and resources in the pursuit. But the rewards are worth it!

Don't Assume:

If you assume that everyone in your organization is evaluating your messages the same way, you are in for a very unpleasant surprise. There are very few things in life that can be stated with 100% certainty, but this is one of them:

Each and every stakeholder having any experience with your company interprets every statement, gesture and action differently.

A failure to spend the time and energy to confirm that your messages (stated, written and expressed through your actions) are being understood in a consistent and accurate manner, costs you every day. It costs your organization not only profits, but sales, customers, partners and employees as well. Your credibility and respect begin to diminish. You set up conflict internally and externally. You create the "us vs. them" attitude that permeates through businesses of all sizes.

A failure to confirm that your actions and your messages are consistent and understood is perhaps the greatest failure – and the greatest opportunity – you currently experience. It is also true that actions



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Speak louder than words, and how you spend your time, how you prioritize, and who you spend your time with are all things that get noticed and processed.

Your Business & Your Culture are a Reflection of YOU:

If you don't like the way your business operates today, chances are good that regardless of what you have said, regardless of what direction you think you have given, the results you are obtaining are a direct result of your influence. Your employees are giving you exactly what they think you're asking for!

In a 2012 study of over 360 "C-level" leaders, it was found that the relationship between leadership and organizational performance is "significant". The study goes on to say that effective leaders can have as much as a **14%** increase in organizational performance over those managers who are perceived as not being effective leaders. While 14% may not sound like much, consider what an instant 14% increase in your company's performance would mean – without any additional costs to the company; growth with no additional expenses. During tough economic times like these, that could double your current year-over-year growth and more than double your current profitability! Just due to more effective leadership.

Being the POE does not alleviate you from the tasks associated with being a role model. Many executives will "delegate" unpleasant tasks to others. Don't kid yourself, your employees see right through this smoke screen. Being the POE means that sometimes you have to do the things you don't like to do. Sometimes your involvement is exactly what is needed. Even if someone else could have handled an issue, by taking care of it yourself, you send a clear signal to everyone else as to what is expected, what kind of culture your organization rewards (or not), and what kind of behavior is acceptable (or not). These are invaluable opportunities for you to make a difference in a positive way.

You have to focus on the things that are unpopular and deal with issues that make you uncomfortable. If you are a quiet, private person, you have to become more aggressive, upbeat and motivating in your daily interactions. If you are more comfortable writing computer code, you still have to schedule meetings and have face-to-face human interactions. You have to do these things or... you have to get out of the way!

Remember:

- Not saying anything - is saying something!
- Not doing anything - is doing something!
- Not dealing with an issue - is dealing with an issue.

And in doing so, you are giving every employee in your organization the green light to act the same way.

If you want to be more successful, understanding your importance as a role model is one of the most important issues you'll face. However, *after understanding comes action*. Knowing what to do is the most important component of success. So how do you become a successful role model and leader?



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What (Or Who) Is A Role Model?

“Polar north can’t get away from the magnet; the magnet finds it, no matter what.”

Jodi Picoult

Becoming a positive role model is a contagious action. Once you set the standards within your organization, others will follow. As the POE you may wonder if you’ll ever be a “good” role model. The first thing that you have to do is reconsider what “good” means.

Consider Woody Hayes, head coach at Ohio State University. The Hayes temper is a thing of legend. Coach Hayes would commonly explode into verbal assaults at coaches and players. He was famous for throwing and destroying objects. He would always slam his hat to the field, destroy his watch, and stomp on his glasses when he got angry. He would throw anything he could get his hands on. A favorite projectile was a water jug that was always on his desk. It was continuously left empty, and the equipment manager would have six replacement jugs available for the ones he broke. One time, he even hurled a film projector towards assistant coach Bill Mallory. Hayes is known for one particular quote: “I will pound and pound and pound you until you quit.” This pretty much sums up his personality, but not his impact.

Richard Nixon was a huge Woody Hayes fan but even Nixon couldn’t get past the Hayes personality. Once Nixon called Hayes after an important win and was put on hold until he was done meeting with his team. Nixon invited Hayes to the White House; “I wanted to talk football, and Woody wanted to talk foreign policy. You know Woody – we discussed foreign policy.”

In a book entitled “Quotable Woody,” Hayes says; “Nobody despises losing more than I do, that’s what got me into trouble over the years, but it also made a man with mediocre ability into a pretty good coach.” As Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin said, “Woody is a God-fearing man. It’s nice to know he’s afraid of somebody.”

Many would argue that this type of explosive behavior is not the way to motivate people. This type of behavior will not get people to perform. Over his career, Woody Hayes amassed a 238-72-10 record and 205-61-10 in the Big Ten. He won four national championships (five if you count the title given to OSU by the National Football Foundation in 1970), 13 Big Ten titles, played in 8 Rose Bowls (including four straight from 72-75), produced 56 All-Americans, had four Heisman Trophy winners, three Outland Trophy winners, and two Lombardi Trophy winners. Some of the assistant coaches under Woody Hayes were Lou Holtz, Bo Schembechler, Rudy Hubbard, Bill Mallory, Earle Bruce, and Dave McClain. All of these men went on to become successful coaches at some of the most respected programs in college football.

Woody Hayes was fired from Ohio State for hitting a player from an opposing team in a fit of passion during a game. The Washington Post says of Hayes, “The assailant is Woody Hayes, and the moment he delivers the punch, his 28-year career as an icon in Columbus and throughout Ohio is over at age 65. By the time the team returns home the next day, Hayes has been fired...”

As you can see, the definition of “who” is a role model, and the actions that make up the “what” is a role model can be very hard to define, and even harder to package into one clear message that would fit for the infinite variations within the human condition. Was Woody Hayes a “good” role model? That would

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depend on your definition of good? Was he successful? Most certainly. Did he have a positive influence on his teams, his school, his state and even the game of college football? Without a doubt. Did he mentor others and were those people successful? As the previous paragraph illustrates, the answer to that is yes. So for many people Woody Hayes was an amazing role model – right up until the time he wasn't.

Are you a good role model? Would you like to work with a company that has spent 40-years helping principals, owners and executives become better leaders, better mentors and better role models. Geoff Ashley & Associates can work with you and your entire executive team to help create a culture of excellence. To learn more, contact us at:

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