

## Leadership in the family

Most people would agree that we live in unstable, complex times and that the sheer weight of expectations and obligations often leave one with a sense of helplessness. This applies equally to our work lives and our family lives and it should not be surprising to learn that corporate organisations and families have a good deal to learn from each other.

Lessons that families can learn from the corporate world include:

- 1) Hierarchies don't work anymore. The leadership function, if reserved for a few top executives only, results in that organisation being too slow, too inflexible and too unimaginative to survive in today's world. Today everyone has to be able to exercise leadership when called upon to do so.
- 2) Effective corporate organisations spend significantly more time on leadership than they do on management.
- 3) Employees in effective organisations share a common vision and know what matters most to them and to the organisation.
- 4) Effective organisations value human resources above all other available resources.

The family unit, in all its various forms, remains the most important and vital pillar of any society. Effective leadership in the family is thus of vital importance not only to individuals within a given family, but also to the organisations those individuals work for and society as a whole.

At this point it may be useful to try to differentiate between leadership and management. Both functions are vital in any family and most family members need to be able to play both roles. The secret is to know which role should be played in any given situation. The following table will give you an idea of the difference between Leadership and Management

<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Management</b>
Doing the right things	Doing things right
Importance	Urgency
Effectiveness	Efficiency
Purpose	Methods
Principles	Practices

Effective families function because of good leadership. Both over-managed and under-managed families are likely to present with more behavioural problems than are families that practice leadership based on sound values.

So how does one go about fostering leadership in your family? One of the most effective and rewarding ways is to write a family mission statement. This statement outlines the family's principles and as such acts as a guiding light for family members in their daily lives. Not having a family mission statement is akin to trying to put an intricate tabletop puzzle together without having the image of the finished picture to refer to. The logical outcome for this scenario is frustration and the abandoning of the project. Like the missing picture, the family mission statement gives vision and a sense of purpose to the family members.

There are 3 steps to constructing a Family Mission Statement.

- 1) *Explore what your family is about.*  
This step involves the family examining their values and their purpose. This process has to involve ALL members of the family and is likely to take some considerable time to finalise. The PROCESS is almost as important as the outcome as it crystalises the very essence of the family's *raison d'être*. The participation of all and the constant refining until all agree, results in a set of values and principles that all family members will buy into.
- 2) *Write the Mission Statement.*  
The writing of the Mission Statement will also likely go through many drafts before everyone is

happy that it accurately reflects the essence of what will govern their everyday lives.

While there is no prescribed format for a Mission Statement, it should endeavour to be timeless in so much as it involves principles and not goals. It should incorporate the family's vision, its purpose and its values and should be seen as a living document that governs everyday life.

### 3) *Stay on Course.*

When one gets on an airplane to fly from Durban to Johannesburg, the pilot knows the destination and has a flight plan of how to get to that destination. During the flight the plane often strays from the exact planned route as the winds and weather change. But because the pilot has the flight plan he can constantly make adjustments to bring the plane back on course and ultimately will arrive at his chosen destination.

The Family Mission statement acts as the family's flight plan. Whenever choices have to be made, a family member can refer to the mission statement for guidance and then make a choice based on the principles and values expressed in the mission statement.

In today's world, every family member is faced by thousands of choices that have to be made on a daily basis. By equipping your family with a Mission Statement, each member can exercise leadership and integrity in the moment of choice.

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**People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are they who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them.**



George Bernard Shaw