

Jack Welsh led with confidence...you can too, by looking within for confidence and vision

Seeing around corners

BY DEBORAH PENTA

Every time I have the opportunity to hear Jack Welsh speak, I come away with something compelling. Jack's candid and straightforward leadership style leave no questions with regard to what he believes and the advice he's giving—there is never any need to read between the lines because he's one of the most matter-of-fact conversationalists of our time.

Business leaders who have made a significant difference are zealots and lead with passion. I remember in the 80s Tom Peters' "walk about management" style caught my attention because he was encouraging executives to leave their comfortable offices and get into the flow with their people. It was a good point and one we still practice today.

Jim Collins, with his acclaimed *Good to Great* book and workshops, has changed the way many of us think about hiring and how we look at our employees within our organizations.



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We are now a business generation that demands A players and we know better than to settle for mediocre performance.

As we close 2007 and enter a new year in one week, perhaps we can take leadership advice from Mr. Welsh. He believes that as leaders, we should reward our teams for "over delivery." Too many of us reward people for meeting goals or doing their jobs. I like Jack's philosophy—perhaps we need to kick off the New Year by extolling the virtues and rewards of a system where every person in the organization is committed to over delivering. Imagine the kind of year we can have!

In a room packed with 5,000 people in Boston last week, Jack was preaching that as leaders, we must energize our people and give them something to believe in—tell them why what we're asking them to do is important and explain why we need to climb the mountain. Without a doubt, vision is huge, but Jack hit the nail on the head when he said, "If the vision isn't right, have the courage to stop it."

He encourages us to never be satisfied and to continue to push ourselves to be better. In leadership roles, this is significant because the more we can grow and do whatever it takes to get ourselves, our companies, our organizations to the next level, we will inadvertently be helping everyone else in our organizations to raise the bar and get to the next level. A leader who stays complacent and never makes strides to push the envelope is setting an example and creating a monotonous corporate culture. On the other hand, a leader who continues to over deliver on a consistent basis sets a much more progressive and prosperous tone for her organization.

As you look at how you can improve your leadership style in 2008 to yield greater results for you and your company, ask yourself these questions: Am I truly authentic as a leader? Am I comfortable in my own skin? Am I resilient? Do I get back on my feet after experiencing a setback or do I let it get the best of me and bring me down? Am I person who sees around corners?

As a leader, you need to be yourself. If you are pretending to be something you're not, not only will people see right through it, but it will show a lack of integrity; people want to do business and work for people they can trust. No one will follow someone who doesn't have integrity.

One of the greatest challenges of a leader is to get back on the horse after a setback, regardless of how significant. Jack Welsh blew up a plant once; "things happen," he says.

You need to be able to see around corners and figure out not only what's next, but what both you and the organization need to do next.

As you chart your course for 2008, discover where you need to push yourself as a leader and have the courage to do it. Reach for what you need to do to strengthen yourself and your organization and drive it with every ounce of passion in your heart so you can energize your team to work collaboratively to make it happen.

It all starts with you. When you have the confidence to lead with confidence, miracles will take place within your organization.

Jack Welsh said, "When I left GE, I felt like I was 6-foot-4 inches tall with hair."

When you get to the close of 2008, how will you feel?

We'd like to know your thoughts. Please email me at dpenta@femaleleaders.org.

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