



MEDIA RELEASE

Enforcing Standards Too Hard For Most Leaders

Monday April 29, 2013. Reflecting on the Australian Cricket team last month when four players were suspended for not doing their homework, Founder and Principal of Kameleons – developing leaders, Michael Peiniger said the event continues to resonate as a demonstration of the need for leaders to stand firm and make tough decisions in the face of immense criticism and pressure.

While there were many former cricketing greats that took to the media to criticise the decision to suspend the players, Peiniger applauded the coach and captain Michael Clarke for their 'line in the sand'.

It is acknowledged that sport helps young people to develop many significant traits such as the importance of teamwork, good communication, striving to achieve goals, leadership, respecting authority and the ability to accept winning and losing with equal grace and maturity. In later life, these fundamental attributes are applied in adult life and particularly in business.

“While many people are reluctant to accept the link between sport and business there are indeed lessons to be learnt. Especially in relation to leaders being called upon to make the tough decisions and this is one of the biggest challenges and defining attributes of leadership,” said Michael Peiniger.

“Whether in business or sport, leaders are judged by their ability to make the difficult decisions because they are needed to grow the business, attain its goals and objectives or simply survive.”

It is well recognized that critical decisions put leaders to the test.

In tumultuous times, true leaders make tough choices with courage and audacity. Others cannot cope with the difficulty and uncertainty so they remain indecisive, and in business, their competitors win their customers and market share.

If any group is going to try and achieve success and become a high performing team, then an appropriate behaviour standard not only has to be agreed and set, it also needs to be maintained.

Not enforcing a standard doesn't make the leader a better friend, a better teammate or a better captain – it just makes both the leader and team weaker.

Michael Peiniger continued, “In fact, considering the situation that was faced by the Australian Cricket team last month and the lessons that are applicable in most work places – who wants to be lead or work with a team member that thinks that the rules don't apply to them?”

Michael Peiniger believes there are four components to creating a standard for a team:

1. Clearly identify the behaviour standard to set
2. As the leader, ensure you are meeting the standard yourself
3. Communicate the standard to all team members, ensuring they understand the 'why', and
4. Enforce the standard

"When it comes to leadership standards, the effort is in the enforcing, not the setting," added Michael Peiniger.

When a leader is required to enforce a standard, there are a number of things that they need to adhere to.

1. The standard being enforced must be clearly articulated and agreed to by the team.
2. The person breaking the standard knew exactly what was required.
3. The person breaking the standard knew exactly what the consequences would be.
4. What was done was for the good of the team, and in the long run, for the individual as well.

Business leaders and managers at all levels are faced with making difficult decisions on a regular basis. This is especially true in today's economic environment.

Michael Peiniger has studied the practice of leadership and the process leaders (both good and bad) go through in making the 'tough call.'

Irrespective of whether leaders make their decisions based on emotion, impulse or extensive facts and data, the best leaders realise that tough decisions are made for the good of the team in the long term.

The best leaders are those that are willing to face temporary unpopularity to maintain and enforce a standard. The truth is, most people placed in leadership positions aren't willing to face that prospect, letting team members break standards and rules in an attempt to stay popular.

Michael Peiniger concluded, "The making of tough decisions is the essence of leadership and leaders are entrusted with the responsibility by employers, customers, employees (the individuals that comprise the Australian Cricket team) to do *'the right thing'!*"

"The right thing might mean terminating an employee, restructuring an organisation, implementing a program, or simply telling someone 'No'. The leader that does not make the right decision and act on it will lose all credibility and trust."

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