

# THE IN-STORE ADVANTAGE



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**"Be the attitude you want to be around." » Tim DeTellis**

## Speaking of Leadership

There is a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson that is one of my all-time favorite leadership lines.

I don't believe he fancied himself a management consultant, but his insight was visionary. He said, "Your actions speak so loudly, I cannot hear what you are saying."

Sure, that's similar to cliché's "Actions speak louder than words," and "You have to walk the walk."

(But it just feels smarter quoting Emerson.)

Most platitudes are eternal because there is much truth in them. In this case, I've preached to thousands of leaders over the years of the importance of personal examples.

It began early on when working mostly with young and/or new managers.

## All According to Plan?

I've frequently had bankers ask my opinion about topics such as what our economy and industry will look like in the future and whether job markets will normalize any time soon.

My most common reaction is to smile and thank them for the compliment of thinking I'm the guy who would know.

One of the most well-known bankers in the world recently had people in a frenzy when, during an interview, he didn't exactly play the role of cheerleader.

When asked similar questions, he gave reasons why he believed the economy is in pretty good shape, and then added, "...but inflation is eroding everything and could derail the economy, causing a minor or major recession."

Many were often intimidated with certain aspects of leadership.

They worried about leading meetings, as well as coaching and motivating their teams.

I always suggested that those things do become more natural with time and experience.

That said, a more immediate and effective way to coach and motivate their teams was through their actions.

One of my mantras has always been that your team will listen to what you say. They are far more likely, however, to copy what they see you doing.

Observable actions will either give your words substance or render them nearly meaningless.

On top of that, teams are just as prone to adopt the demeanors of their leaders.

I have frequently kidded with managers that I don't need to physically see them to know what kind of mood they are in today.

Just give me a few minutes to observe their teams.

While that usually gets smiles and head nods, I ask them to take that observation to heart.

Pay attention to the actions and demeanors of the people who report to you, and you'll be looking into a usually pretty accurate mirror.

You will rarely find an outwardly upbeat, fully engaged manager with a disinterested or unengaged team. The opposite is true as well.

Perpetually grouchy managers seldom have teams who appear to be enjoying life all that much.

Does that mean effective leaders are always in a great mood?

Of course not. Leaders are human.

But the best among them are continuously aware of how their outward demeanor often speaks loudest of all.

What is yours saying today?

Hearing that, I was reminded of the joke that whenever someone places a "but" in a statement, it means ignore everything said up until then.

What they truly believe usually follows the "but."

After his statement caused a stir with analysts and pundits, he "cleared things up" in a subsequent interview.

He stated it could "be nothing" or it could "be bad," but he wasn't predicting either one.

I'm not sure if the interviewer said, "Well...*okie dokie* then." But I'm sure she thought it.

I admired that banker being honest enough to admit even he, with large teams of economists and the most extensive and sophisticated data available at his disposal, cannot see the future.

Still, it's not hard to find well-known pundits who seem to be consistently wrong with their predictions.

Their batting averages aren't great. Yet, folks still tune in for...or read up on... their latest projections.

I suppose there is a level of comfort folks feel if they believe someone knows what is coming.

While that may be human nature, there is a problem when we become more focused on forecasting than on executing to the realities before us.

If we're not careful, we end up more dedicated to our plans than our goals.

We become more interested in explaining why our results were impacted by "unpredicted events" and/or bad luck than in acknowledging, absorbing, and acting on the realities before us.

Also, when "macro problems" abound, micro-opportunities frequently do, as well.

Times of uncertainty frequently shake things up and present opportunities for those willing to identify... and act... on them.

Strive to be a person who does.

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**"Some people walk in the rain; others just get wet."**

**» Roger Miller**

*Dave Martin, author of The In-Store Advantage, has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.*

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