



The impact of leadership

- Clive Wilson, Primeast, UK



Eric Clark (pictured above) is Chief Fire Officer in North Yorkshire, UK. He is a man on a mission, having grasped the opportunities presented by modernisation. He is motivated by just one thing, saving life. Such is his passion for this aim that he has sold his vision to the stakeholders that make up his fire authority. They have taken the mantle and named it "125 Alive" representing the targeted gain in lives saved over a ten-year period that will be the product of a comprehensive change programme.

At our last leadership consultation, Eric spoke not only of his vision for North Yorkshire but also how he hoped to share the journey he had taken with others at a national and international level. This got me thinking. If his methods for change are held in esteem and his lessons learned shared, what then will be the real gain from this man's work? If only ten fire authorities learn only half the lessons, and apply them over a similar ten-year period, then surely lives saved will be close to five-fold the original figure. And if we assume, somewhat conservatively, that the gains continue for just a further ten years, then it becomes easy to envisage over a thousand lives being saved as a result of this man's leadership.

This Chief Fire Officer is certainly not seeking acclaim for his work; indeed he had not considered the potential knock-on effects of his modernisation programme until our conversation. But as we hypothesised, I could see his motivation growing and growing – to everyone's benefit.

*Leadership is a precious gift,
the gains of which will almost always be underestimated.*

When you go about your business today, spare one moment to consider the true impact of your decisions, your actions and your encouragement. Those colleagues you inspire to grasp the nettle, who will they inspire? What effect will the products of your work have on the wider world? Who will you encourage and what effect will that have on their children, their family, their friends, their colleagues?

Leadership touches people in many ways. Something which we think is a small action might have a profound impact on those we lead. Take for example the encouragement given to a subordinate to apply for a job outside their comfort zone. This small action demonstrates our faith in the individual and might have the effect of inspiring a bigger role and a bigger contribution.

I was recently running a sales-team workshop and one of the participants commented, "I owe most of my success to a man I worked for years ago who taught me many of the techniques I use today and which I have shared with dozens of others over the years." I asked him if he had fed this back to his role-model. He said he hadn't but agreed that he would do so before the week was out. Feedback to leaders is a powerful reinforcement of their actions, big or small.

If you're a leader in today's hectic business world, take time out to reflect on the impact you have. Feel the responsibility and be motivated to go the extra mile for your people, whoever they are. And if you can recall those who inspired you to do what you do now, maybe today is the right time to pick up the 'phone and say "Thank you."



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