



# "Leadership Leads to Great Things"

By Bryan Rader ■ *MediaWorks*

What is great leadership? When you think about great leaders of businesses, countries, institutions or civic organizations, what separates the great ones from the rest of the pack? What skills do they possess?

Do the leaders of our industry, and of the PCOs in our industry exhibit these same skills? How are you doing as a leader in your organization?

When our industry falls on hard times, or a company is faced with many challenges (whether to survive or grow), it is so important for leaders to step up and provide direction, motivation and encouragement for all employees of their company. This is true in every industry, and particularly ours right now.

There have been some great examples of people within the private broadband industry who display tremendous leadership skills and qualities. Bob Palle of Blonder-Tongue has been a strong supporter for our market segment both from a product standpoint and a regulatory standpoint. Bill Burhop who leads the IMCC, our industry's trade association based in Washington D.C., shows leadership through his education and lobbying efforts. And, Bob Vogel-sang who has participated in numerous ways in our industry as a programming aggregator, magazine publisher and broadband service provider, has led by his example, enthusiasm and active role.

There are many other examples of great leaders in our industry who are working hard to "expand the pie" and create more opportunities and innovation for private operators and real estate owners.

In fact, some of the best leaders in our industry have actually come from the customer side. A number of the key Board participants within our trade association are representatives from real estate companies such as AvalonBay, AMLI, Gables and Camden. Their involvement, recommen-

dations and proposed solutions, along with their utilization of PCOs in select situations has displayed tremendous leadership.

So, if leadership is so important to an industry or organization, what elements define this important role? What skills and ideas should we look for to emulate as great leaders?

You do not have to look any further than Rudy Giuliani, the former Mayor of New York, who displayed one of the greatest examples of leadership in recent memory. He provided our entire nation with spirit, hope and encouragement during a very dark hour two years ago.

In Giuliani's recent book on Leadership, he outlines several points that were instrumental in his ability to be a successful leader. There were three key themes that touched me the most as being important for a company leader, particularly in a service organization such as a provider of broadband services.

He discusses accountability quite frequently. Giuliani states that "everyone's accountable, all of the time." And "more than anyone, leaders should welcome being held accountable. Nothing builds confidence in a leader more than a willingness to take responsibility for what happened during his watch."

What Giuliani is talking about, happens every day in our company. If a problem exists on a client's property, we cannot blame a programmer for not authorizing a channel, a supplier for having a part on backorder, or a landscaper for cutting our cable plant. We are still accountable to the property owner and our subscribers. It's "our" responsibility to address the problem and solve it.

Giuliani continues. "Looking back, I believe that the skill I developed better than any other was surrounding myself with great people." This is not new or earth-shattering advice but it is one of the most impor-

tant elements of great leadership. A strong leader has a strong team. A leader of a successful PCO must have a strong Customer Service Manager, Marketing Director and Operations Manager. How else can you be successful?

Another one of his messages for leaders is to "study, read and learn independently." Teaching yourself first puts leaders in a position to educate and motivate their staff. It also creates an environment where everyone in your organization is continuously focused on learning and advancing. Imagine the difference between a company that is constantly educating itself and enhancing its skills, and a company that has no emphasis on learning. Reading, corresponding, and attending conferences are a great way to promote this leadership skill.

There are so many other great bits of advice Giuliani suggests that will assist in the personal goal of great leadership - accountability, team selection and education are just three of them.

I recently invited the fifteen key players on my management team to a two-day retreat in Washington, D.C. to further develop our skills as leaders of our company. It was a great experience, and one we hope to do again.

I hope you will focus on your leadership skills too. Our industry will certainly benefit from it. ■

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## About the Author

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