



***TerrificMentors International***

*The Seal of Good Mentoring  
practical experience and expertise*

*Enthusiasm, Encouragement, Determination*

## **POWER TO DEVELOP**

**John Bittleston**

The power to control has slightly negative connotations of restricting, limiting and preventing. The power to develop is more positive. It is what every business needs; the alternative is decline. Power to develop is especially important for the successful small company, proficient in its market, knowledgeable about its customers and technically ahead of competition but seemingly with a bar to growing beyond a certain size. SMEs are faced with this dilemma.

How does a company get over this barrier?

As with most things in business, leadership is the key. A company needs different leadership as it gets bigger, as technologies alter its focus and as younger staff emerge with new ideas. A good leader spots the changes before problems arise and prepares himself and his resources to meet them.

In WWII Field Marshall Montgomery planned and organised several big battles. His planning - and his insistence on adequate resources - was legendary. Once the battle started he retired to his caravan and went to sleep. Attempting to direct every move in a battle would have removed the management of the battle from his Generals and led to confused lines of authority. "Wake me when we've won," he would say, adding, wryly, "but before we've lost." His rule of 'no surprises' is fundamentally sound for business, too.

Most of the characteristics of a good leader are well known but the most important is seldom mentioned. A leader must inspire his followers, must encourage them to share their ideas and opinions, must decide but make his decisions truly collegial. He must have courage and common sense, must understand that his subordinates are not galley slaves.

The single most important characteristic of a leader is stature or presence. This has nothing to do with height or weight. It has to do with intellect but the most intelligent people do not necessarily have the greatest stature. It also has to do with office. The President of the United States has stature derived from his job but recent Presidents have demonstrated how greatly personal ability and behaviour can enhance or diminish that stature.

Stature is someone who looks like a leader. It derives from confidence and humility - confidence that you will handle whatever comes along; acceptance that your decisions will be wrong some of the time.

When I wanted to get Cerebos Pacific into the fast food business I imported a wonderful but never-before-franchised product from Malaysia. It failed. We analysed our failure and saw that it was about execution not concept. Within four years we had the Singapore and Malaysian Pizza Hut restaurants up and running - and worth fifty times what we had paid for them.

The power to develop depends on the leader having the confidence to move on from his micro-management days - essential at the start of any business - and leave the execution of the business to his colleagues. The bigger the business gets the more time he must spend understanding colleagues and the less time he must devote to taking their decisions for them. In the biggest companies the top man spends most of his time deploying and motivating his troops.

Acquiring or having stature is a classic chicken and egg problem - difficult to say which comes first. Most people can acquire the stature needed to be boss if they really want to. If they don't they should not develop a business.

It is critically important that SMEs import the role of stature into development and develop faster than at present.

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