



A Great Marriage is Crucial to Effective Leadership

By Steven L. Anderson, Ph.D., MBA

I coach a lot of leaders whose number one problem is tension in their marriage. Many of them have given up on their marriage and hope to find happiness in their business lives. But, this is not possible. Marriage is the foundation of a good life. If you want to be a good leader, you have to have integrity. If you want to have integrity, I suggest you start in the most fundamental place; make sure your marriage is sound. The most fundamental relationship in your life is that with your partner. In my experience, if that relationship is not strong you will never be able to fully develop your potential outside of your home either. My marriage is a source of tremendous satisfaction and fulfillment. It's easy for me to lead at work because I am so happy at home.

How does one make their marriage great? Well, as boring as it may sound, a great marriage is hard work. It's like a garden. If you want to have a great harvest, you have to cultivate it regularly. Allow me to give you some examples from my own life. I have an amazing wife. Charlisa is the most wonderful woman I have ever met. She makes me incredibly happy. We have a wonderful marriage. But the incredibly close bond that we share does not happen by accident. We work on it every day. Here are some things we do to make sure the fire of our love stays hot:

1. Every year we go away for a 3 day retreat. On that retreat, we review our year, discuss the upcoming year, and set goals to keep our marriage strong.
2. We have written a vision statement for our marriage. This two page document describes what we want our marriage to be and creates a vision for our future together.
3. We allow room in our vision so that each of us can pursue our own dreams.
4. We feel that in great marriages, spouses are close in mind, body and soul. Therefore, we constantly strive to learn from each other. We also try to stay in good physical condition. We make it a priority to make time for intimacy. Finally, we work to develop our spiritual lives. We both meditate and journal frequently and we often have discussions about how we can actualize our potential and do a better job of serving our fellow man.
5. We set aside regular time to nurture our marriage. For example:
 - We have a glass of wine every evening and discuss our day.
 - We go out to dinner (alone) every Saturday night.
 - We go away on a long weekend every 60 days.
 - We take at least three weeks of vacation together annually.
 - We take an annual retreat.

I do not share this information about our marriage to impress you. I talk about it to inspire you. I am crazy about my wife because she is an incredible human being, but also because she is so committed to a thriving marriage. Whatever ability I possess as a leader is greatly enhanced by her love for me. This union gives me a very strong, solid foundation to serve others.

So, if you want to improve your ability to lead at work, you may want to start by cultivating the most important relationship in your life; your marriage.

If you want to learn more about making your marriage great, you may want to start by reading the following books:

"Getting the Love you Want" by Harville Hendrix

"The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work" by John Gottman

"Why Marriages Succeed or Fail" by John Gottman