

# What's the Difference between Being a Leader and Being a Kindergarten Teacher? Nothing!

by Karen Colligan

*Oh the joys of leadership! In my work with leaders, I often compare being a leader with being a kindergarten teacher. There are some clear correlations between the two. Here are some that come to mind for me. What correlations come to mind for you?*

- John stole my idea. *Translation: Johnny stole my truck.*
- I want more career opportunities. *Translation: I only got one cookie.*
- Why is Mary getting all the 'cushy' projects? *Translation: My cookie is broken and Mary's isn't.*
- Suck-up who wants to work less and get all the perks. *Translation: Here's an apple for my favorite teacher.*
- I've been working too much and I need a vacation. *Translation: I am tired. May I take a nap now?*
- When do we get our bonuses? *Translation: When is recess?*
- Sally pushed me aside and is taking over the project. *Translation: Sally hit me!*
- I don't like you as my leader and I want a new leader. *Translation: I want my Mom!*
- Why do I have to do all the work and my colleagues get off the hook and get the credit?  
*Translation: Christine isn't helping build our sand castle.*
- I should get this promotion because I want it – what does skill set have to do with anything?  
*Translation: The dog ate my permission slip and I still should be able to go on the field trip!*

Ya gotta laugh, and yet these statements reflect just a few of the things leaders must endure. We are asking our employees to step up and deliver at a new level of productivity. We are asking our leaders to be bold and creative and build a team of the best and the brightest.

The question becomes – are you, as a leader, equipped to be as wise and innovative as our kindergarten teachers? Leadership is not for the weak of heart. Leadership represents a clear set of skills and a commitment to a set of standards. As a leader, your team looks to you for guidance and assurance. Leaders need to be trustworthy, look into the future, and provide a roadmap to that vision. Leaders need to be competent. They challenge the status quo and are strong in their convictions. And no matter what, a confident leader has a heart.

Yes, there is business to be conducted, customers to be satisfied, and sales to be achieved. The best leader doesn't lose sight of the business, yet, why are we all here in the first place? It's not just to sell more, crush our competition and be the lone ranger. We are here on this planet to make it a better place, to make whatever we do for a living the best possible. Without heart, a leader becomes just another cog in the wheel. No different..no better...than any inanimate object.

The difference between a good leader and an *extraordinary* leader is the capacity to see the human aspect of the business. To inspire those around them to be all they can be...to push them and believe in them to achieve a level they didn't believe possible. As John Quincy Adams said: *"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."*

So the next time you start thinking...am I a leader...or am I a kindergarten teacher...smile a tad and realize you are both!!

What similarities do you see between being a leader and being a kindergarten teacher? Send them to me, Karen Colligan, at [kcolligan@peoplethink.biz](mailto:kcolligan@peoplethink.biz).

*About the author: Karen Colligan is a leader in the development of high-performance leaders, teams and individuals for talent engagement, organizational excellence and corporate growth.*



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