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## Leadership Starts at the Top

*Russel Horwitz - Kwela Blog, August 2008*

### **Do members of your executive team take their own development as seriously as they would like to see middle management improve?**

We recently delivered a leadership development program in a small business grappling with multiple issues from adverse market conditions to leadership succession. After we designed the program the CEO asked if he could take part – interesting I thought, because so many executives believe they “don’t have time”, and prefer to send along their subordinates.

It did not stop there – when this CEO received his 360 feedback, he was the first to share both his strengths and weaknesses with his entire team, who were taking part on the program, and they all followed suit. To cap it off, within a few days he distributed an e-mail to his team containing his entire action plan, saying exactly what he was going to do to reach his development goal.

By the end of the program, not only were the results of the entire team among the best I have seen, but they were openly sharing their weaknesses, fears and doubts with each other, a sure sign of that elusive thing called trust. I have no doubt that a lot of this had to do with the humility of the leader, and his willingness to model the way. I think that this very real story provides some lessons to us all:

- When the leader of the pack makes it his business to improve himself/herself, it is a powerful role model for others. Great leaders see this as important, and rather than complaining about being too busy to take part, they make time.
- People are unlikely to improve much when they stay inside their own head – however, when they share their strengths, weaknesses and action plans openly with others, chances are they will be very successful in their leadership journey.
- There is no substitute for humility when it comes to securing the loyalty of your team. Paradoxically, the more human and fallible you present yourself as, the more people will want to follow your lead.

Ask yourself:

**What are you good at?**

**What are you not good at?**

**What are you doing about it?**

**Have you shared that with your team?**

This is what great leaders do.