

Leadership - It should look the same in government as it does in corporate America

I have continued to be disappointed in the leadership of our fine city for a number of reasons over the last couple of years. Maybe my lens has been too hyper-focused on it after researching and studying politics more. But that doesn't change "what" I am seeing; it just means I am paying attention and closely enough to actually see it now.

I spent 25 years in human resources and the last portion of those years was as an executive, leading the HR function for a multi-million-dollar organization. When I saw discontent among employees, low morale, safety incidents rise, and absenteeism skyrocket, etc., I knew these were all symptoms of a greater problem.....a lack of leadership, at multiple levels. It was also a result of our leaders not getting out into the organization to walk with, work with, and listen to the people they served.

When it comes to the city of Indianapolis, we are seeing a decay in the fiber of our communities. That decay consists of crime, homelessness, drug addiction, lack of food, and poor infrastructure and roads, and debris both physically and figuratively all around our city. When are our leaders going to realize that they can't lead from the stage, or their offices? When will they understand that regardless of political lines, we must work together to fix what is broken?

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This press conference on Monday, February 10 was telling in so many ways. It put a spotlight on leaders who are obviously disconnected from their communities. It showed a lack of diversity from the stage. It made our reality painfully obvious that what they are doing is NOT WORKING.

The looks on the faces from the stage were disconnected. Their responses were proof that these people have not regularly, if at all, been out in the communities to listen to these cries for help. "We are telling you right now..." one citizen cries, listing off all of the things she sees impacting her community. She nailed it! She called out the needs, she called out the meetings the communities have had to discuss the needs, and she called out those on the stage as not being at any of these discussions.

As leaders, corporate, government, or otherwise, we are charged with 1) Knowing our people, 2) Serving our people, and 3) Supporting our people. Indianapolis city leaders are not doing any of these things. What would happen if we were in corporate America and all of these elected officials were in leadership roles and their organizations were failing to this degree. What if their organization had employees that were this discontent with their leadership, environment, and work settings? They would QUIT! They would leave! But unfortunately, the majority of the citizens impacted by this poor leadership do not have the means to do so. They also don't want to leave their families behind, and they want better for our city.

“It’s the outrage we’ve been looking for....” quoted one leader.

This is not the right approach from someone in leadership. To let things get to the point that you expect, desire, and look for outrage among your people? They/we have been crying out for way too long. This is a lesson in politics for sure. The lesson is that we need more people to consider running for office who know how to run a business, who know how to lead people and organizations, who know how to build and repair both physical structures and relationships, and who are willing to listen and walk and work alongside the people of Indianapolis.

This was disappointing to say the very least. We can do better.