

DO YOU HAVE A LEADERSHIP DOJO?

By Marilyn Thiet

I've written in previous blogs about the importance of leaders continuing to learn and hone their leadership skills. Like anything else we do, the more we practice and perfect our techniques, the better we become. Ask any professional athlete or musician the ratio of time they spend learning and practicing compared to the amount of time they spend playing. No doubt, learning and practicing wins out. So why should it be any different for a business leader? Yet my guess is that for most leaders in the business world, the time purposely devoted to learning and practicing is minimal.

To put one's self in a physical, mental, and emotional place of learning takes dedicated effort. In Strozzi-Heckler and Leider's book, *The Leadership Dojo, Build Your Foundation as an Exemplary Leader*, the authors talk about the concept of building a leadership dojo. Dojo is a Japanese term that literally means "place of the way". Most often it is the place where people go to learn and study the martial arts. The dojo provides the students a sacred place to open themselves to learn the physical, mental, and emotional elements of their art. Traditionally it is a place managed and run by the students, not the instructors. As leaders how can we create a space for ourselves to continue to learn and hone our leadership skills, a place that allows us to practice and understand the mental, physical, and emotional practices that will allow us to become better leaders?

So often we think that the occasional leadership class, webinar, or reading of an article on the topic is enough to keep us on the top of our game. As someone who makes a living out of helping others develop their leadership skills, mainly through leadership workshops, it would not bode well for me to say they are not effective. Quite the contrary, coming together with others to learn and practice our leadership skills is very important in our professional growth. But is it enough? I don't think so.

We can create our own leadership dojo – our own "place of the way" that allows us to think about our leadership on a daily basis. In a true dojo, the practitioner consciously thinks about their art and how it impacts them physically, mentally, and emotionally. What is one thing you are trying to improve in your leadership skills? How can you make space in your day to devote time to being very present with your self and open to the changes you need to make? How can you begin to practice the changes needed in your physical reactions and emotional responses to become a better leader? I encourage you to create your own leadership dojo, a place and time to focus daily on being in a state of self-awareness, open to the possibilities of change. The place does not have to be fancy and the time does not have to be long. Take the ear buds out on your morning run or while walking the dog and think. Focus inward instead of outward. Find a bench or comfy chair on which you can spend even 15 minutes a day focused on the changes

you will make and how to make them. Make this a practice, something that you do daily and relish in the power that you have to make yourself a better leader.