

How to Become a Better Leader

by **Four Time Olympian Ruben Gonzalez**

When I decided to take up the luge, and train for the Olympics I was 21 years old. Back then I thought I could make it to the Olympics all by myself. I still had a lot of growing up to do...

In “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,” Steven Covey talks about three stages people go through - dependence, independence, and interdependence. At 21, I was still in the independent stage, and needed to move on to becoming interdependent.

Along the way I realized that I needed some help. In order to accomplish great things, I was going to have to develop some leadership, and people skills to build a team. Then I would have to work through the team, to make my Olympic dream come true. I was going to have to turn singles luge into a team sport. It's no different in any big project or endeavor. Lone Rangers never accomplish as much, as people who work through teams.

It takes two things to be a good leader - passion and integrity.

If you are passionate about your mission, you will attract the people who are like minded; people who would like to be a part of your mission. I was passionate. I told everyone I talked to about my Olympic dream. Everyone.

And I was excited about it. I wasn't wishy-washy. Other people had no doubt that I believed in, and was committed to the dream. By doing that, whenever I talked to someone who was interested in the Olympics, I became their link to the Olympic Games. And many times they were willing to help me out.

Everyone has the capacity to be passionate about something. Unfortunately, most people keep their passion all bottled in. They don't want to show their passion out of fear, of what others might think. I didn't care what others thought. I actually wanted to know who didn't believe in me, so I could stop associating with them.

The first part of leadership is passion for the cause. The second part is integrity.

Would you follow someone you don't trust? Of course not. So if you want to be the leader, and have others follow you, you need to be absolutely trustworthy. Your word is gold. You keep your word. You start being very careful about what you promise.

You must deliver on every promise. Every time you don't, your credibility and your reputation will suffer. The only way to become trustworthy in other people's eyes, is to always under promise and over deliver. If you always do that, people will automatically trust you.

If you have passion for the cause, and you are a person of integrity, you'll be ahead of 95% of the people out there. People will be attracted to you, and you will be able to accomplish great things.