

Quality Quotes

On Excellence, Leadership, and Commitment

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On Excellence

“Why is there never enough time to do it right...but always enough time to do it over?”
(Anonymous)

“Good is not good where better is expected.” (Thomas Fuller)

“There is a better way...Find it!” (Thomas Edison) [Instead of, ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.’]

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” (Aristotle)

“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you always got.”
(From a speech, unattributed)

“Definition of insanity: Doing the same old things and expecting different results.” (From a speech, unattributed)

“When your work speaks for itself, don’t interrupt.” (Anonymous)

“Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of intelligent effort.” (John Ruskin)

“Only in the dictionary does success come before work.” (Anonymous)

“People wish to produce quality; they wish to have pride in workmanship.” (W. Edwards Deming)

“Great thoughts reduced to practice become great acts.” (William Hazlitt)

“When organizations and societies are young, they are flexible, fluid, not yet paralyzed by rigid specialization and willing to try anything once. As the organization or society ages, vitality diminishes, flexibility gives way to rigidity, creativity fades and there is a loss of capacity to meet challenges from unexpected directions...In the ever-renewing organization or society, what matures is a system or framework within which continuous innovation, renewal and rebirth can occur.” (John W. Gardner)

“I have offended God and man because my work didn’t reach the quality it should have.”
(Leonardo da Vinci, on his deathbed)

“Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives.” (Willa A. Foster)

“People forget how fast you did a job—but they remember how well you did it.”
(Anonymous)

“The quality of a person’s life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor.” (Vince Lombardi)

“People seldom improve when they have no other model but themselves to copy after.”
(Oliver Goldsmith)

“It’s a funny thing about life: If you refuse to accept anything but the very best, you will very often get it.” (W. Somerset Maugham)

“You don’t get ahead by making products and then separating the good from the bad, because that’s wasteful. It wastes the time of people who are paid wages, it wastes machine time, and it wastes materials.” (W. Edwards Deming)

“All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.” (From a bulletin board, unattributed)

“If you think training is expensive...consider ignorance.” (Anonymous)

“If you think satisfying customers is expensive...consider not satisfying them.”
(Anonymous)

“The single most important thing to remember about any enterprise is that there are no results inside its walls. The result of a business is a satisfied customer.” (Peter Drucker)

“Do you know what the largest room in the world is? The room for improvement.”
(Anonymous)

“The bitterness of poor quality lingers long after the sweetness of low price.” (Miles Ezell, Sr.)

“Some people consider the customer a wallet with a person attached.” (Gene Perret’s *Funny Business*)

On Leadership

“Management is about coping with complexity. Leadership, by contrast, is coping with change. More change always demands more leadership.” (John Kotter)

“Leadership and renewal are intertwined. At Motorola, a leader is someone who takes us elsewhere—helps us renew.” (Bob Galvin, Chairman, Motorola, Inc.)

“No one rises to low expectations.” (From a speech, unattributed)

“There is probably no greater waste in industry today than that of willing employees prevented by insensitive leadership from applying their energies and ambitions in the interest of the companies for which they work.” (Pat Haggerty, Chairman, Texas Instruments)

“If anything goes bad, I did it. If anything goes semi-good, then we did it. If anything goes real good, then you did it. That’s all it takes to get people to win football games for you.” (Bear Bryant)

“Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.” (Albert Schweitzer)

“The world is made up of three kinds of people: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who say ‘What happened?’” (Anonymous)

“You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer. You cannot further the brotherhood of man by encouraging class hatred. You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich. You cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than you earn. You cannot build character and courage by taking away man’s initiative and independence. You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves.” (Abraham Lincoln)

“Treat people as though they were what they ought to be and you help them become what they are capable of being.” (Goethe)

“Correction does much, but encouragement does more.” (Goethe)

“Never tell people *how* to do things. Tell them *what* you want them to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.” (Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.)

“People are order-seeking. Structures will emerge; we don’t have to pre-design them.” (Margaret Wheatley)

“Too often, higher-ups make important decisions without diagnosing the situation—finding out what the real needs are. That’s like going into a field, shooting a gun, and expecting a duck to fly by.” (From a bulletin board, unattributed)

“Ready, fire, aim.” (Anonymous)

“Don’t be afraid to take a big step if one is indicated. You can’t cross a chasm in two small jumps.” (David Lloyd George)

“A new idea is delicate. It can be killed by a sneer or a yawn; it can be stabbed to death by a frown on the right person’s brow.” (Charles Brower)

“Criticize the performance, not the performer.” (Anonymous)

“Competition brings out the best in products and the worst in people.” (David Sarnoff)

“What a person thinks on his own without being stimulated by the thoughts and experiences of other people is even in the best case rather paltry and monotonous.” (Albert Einstein)

“Leaders don’t invent motivation in their followers; they unlock it. What they work with is generally a great tangle of motives. Leaders tap those particular motives that serve the purposes of group action in pursuit of shared goals.” (John W. Gardner)

“Put the best people against the toughest task. Agree upon the overall objective, and then get out of their way. When you have great people, you can do this with increasing levels of confidence.” (Donald M. Kendall, Chairman, Pepsico)

“‘Would you tell me please which way I ought to go from here?’ ‘That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,’ said the cat. ‘I don’t much care where,’ said Alice. ‘Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,’ said the cat.” (Lewis Carroll)

“The greatest thing in this world is not so much where we are, but in what direction we are moving.” (Oliver Wendell Holmes)

“It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle than to initiate a new order of things.” (Machiavelli)

“Since opportunity and danger are inseparable, it is impossible to make a significant step forward without encountering danger; and obversely, the scent of danger should alert us to the fact that we may be headed in the right direction.” (James Lipton)

“Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds.” (Albert Einstein)

“Managers do not motivate employees by giving them higher wages, more benefits, or new status symbols. Rather, employees are motivated by their own inherent need to succeed at a challenging task. The manager’s job, then, is not to motivate people to get them to achieve; instead the manager should provide opportunities for people to achieve so they will become motivated.” (Frederick Herzberg)

“The pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; the optimist, the opportunity in every difficulty.” (L. P. Jacks)

“It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something.” (Franklin Roosevelt)

“There is no way to make people like change. You can only make them feel less threatened by it.” (Frederick O. R. Hayes)

“Approach each new problem not with a view of finding what you hope will be there, but to get the truth, the realities that must be grappled with. You may not like what you find. In that case you are entitled to try to change it. But do not deceive yourself as to what you do find to be the facts of the situation.” (Bernard M. Baruch)

“If we use no ceremony toward others, we shall be treated without any. People are soon tired of paying trifling attentions to those who receive them with coldness, and return them with neglect.” (William Hazlitt)

“To be persuasive, we must be believable. To be believable, we must be credible. To be credible, we must be truthful.” (Edward R. Murrow)

“You can’t achieve anything without getting in someone’s way. You can’t be detached and effective.” (Abba Eban)

“When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.” (Ernest Hemingway)

“All glory comes from daring to begin.” (Eugene F. Ware)

“Some men see things as they are and say ‘Why?’ I dream things that never were, and say ‘Why not?’” (George Bernard Shaw)

“The spirit, the will to win, and the will to excel are the things that endure. These qualities are so much more important than the events that occur.” (Vince Lombardi)

“Real leaders are ordinary people with extraordinary determination.” (Anonymous)

“The person who goes the farthest is generally the one who is willing to do and dare. The sure-thing boat never gets far from shore.” (Dale Carnegie)

“All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence, and success is sure.” (Mark Twain)

“Consider the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out.” (James Bryant Conant)

“Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.”
(Theodore Roosevelt)

“In the end, the employee must take the responsibility for his or her own growth...The best a leader can do is understand the conditions creating a climate of growth and do everything possible to irrigate.” (Warren Bennis)

“If you can dream it, you can do it.” (Walt Disney)

“The need for meaning runs so deep in people that organizations must supply it if they are to renew.” (Robert Waterman)

“Ideas are funny things; they never work unless you do.” (Anonymous)

“Imagination is more important than knowledge.” (Albert Einstein)

“There is at least one point in the history of any company when you have to change dramatically to rise to the next performance level. Miss the moment, and you start to decline.” (Andrew Grove, Chairman, Intel)

“Like the frog that will sit in a pot of water and let itself be slowly boiled to death, we are very good at reacting to immediate danger to our survival, but we are very poor at recognizing gradual threats.” (Peter Senge)

“Empowerment. No word has been so overused, and thence abused, in the last few years. Nonetheless, giving everyone a piece of the action, fiscally and psychologically, and letting them by and large do their own thing...well, that’s the ticket...The empowerment ‘thing’ can be screwed up to a fare-thee-well, but immeasurable energy is unleashed when it’s done right.” (Tom Peters)

“Change is long hard work—and, everything looks like a failure in the middle—and that’s when the critics surface.” (Rosabeth Moss Kanter)

“What counts is what you learn after you know it all.” (John Wooden)

“The vitality of thought is in adventure. Ideas won’t keep. Something must be done about them. When the idea is new, its custodians have fervor, live for it, and, if need be, die for it.” (Albert North Whitehead)

On Commitment

“You can buy a man’s time; you can buy his physical presence at a given place; you can even buy a measured number of his skilled motions per hour. But you can not buy

enthusiasm...you can not buy loyalty...you can not buy the devotion of hearts, minds, or souls. You must earn these.” (Clarence Francis)

“We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing while others judge us by what we have already done.” (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)

“Commitment, not authority, produces results.” (William Gore)

“Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality. It is the words that speak boldly of your intentions. And the actions which speak louder than words. It is making the time when there is none. Coming through time after time after time, year after year after year. Commitment is the stuff character is made of; the power to change the face of things. It is the daily triumph of integrity over skepticism.” (From a poster, unattributed)

“Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.” (Will Rogers)

“To get quality, which gets me productivity, I have to get it through other people; and I have to learn to work together with everybody else. It’s a whole bunch of little commitments that make the thing work at all levels, with everyone playing their part.” (Peter J. Trepanier)

“Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.” (Calvin Coolidge)

“It’s easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than to think your way into a new way of acting.” (Anonymous)

“We learn...10% of what we read...20% of what we hear...30% of what we see...50% of what we read and hear...70% of what is discussed with others...80% of what we experience personally...95% of what we teach to someone else!” (William Glasser)

“This is the beginning of a new day, to use as I will. I can waste it...or use it for good. But what I do today is important, because I am exchanging a day of my life for it! When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever, leaving in its place something that I have traded for it. I want it to be gain, and not loss; good, and not evil; success, and not failure; in order that I shall not regret the price that I have paid for it.” (W. Heartsill Wilson)

“Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishment toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results. Simply stated, it is less me and more *we*.” (From a poster, unattributed)

“The highest and best form of efficiency is the spontaneous cooperation of a free people.” (Bernard Baruch)

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has.” (Margaret Mead)

“People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don’t believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can’t find them, make them,” (George Bernard Shaw)

“We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief requirements of life, when all we need to make us really happy is something to be enthusiastic about.” (Charles Kingsley)

“QALTY needs U and I.” (From a bulletin board, unattributed)

“I am convinced that life is 10% of what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our attitudes.” (Charles Swindoll)

“This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody’s job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn’t do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.” (From a bulletin board, unattributed)