

LI's top executives share their leadership tips

“Have trust in your staff and be someone who staff members can trust,” says **Joseph Milillo**, chief executive of Ronkonkoma-based **Long Island Power Solutions**.

The skills and communication styles of top decision-makers can make the difference between a workplace that keeps employees engaged and one that fails to attract and keep talented workers.

Vision, trust and the ability to absorb feedback and implement employee ideas are all qualities that employees at some of Long Island's Top Workplaces said their leaders exhibited. It's those qualities that workers said give them confidence in their company's leadership.

Based on Energage's 2019 Top Workplaces survey for Newsday, the three Long Island leaders who inspired the most confidence in their employees were:

Wayne Grossé, president and chief executive of Bethpage Federal Credit Union, in the large-company category

Joseph K. Posillico, president and chief executive of Farmingdale-based Posillico Inc., in the mid-sized company category

Joseph Milillo, chief executive of Ronkonkoma-based Long Island Power Solutions, in the small company category.

What qualities do you think are vital for a successful business leader?

Grossé:



Empathy and good communications skills. You need to be approachable and get information from all levels. A lot of places, when they're looking for solutions, they just listen to the executive team. We don't do that. We do a lot of focus groups internally, and most of the input we get makes a difference.

Posillico:



You have to have a clear vision of where you want to bring your organization and you have to be able to communicate that and get people to buy into that. The other aspect is to be opened-minded, listen to people and don't just do things because it's "my idea." No one wants to do something because they're told to do something they want to do something because they think it's the right thing to do.

Milillo:



Have trust in your staff and be someone who staff members can trust. Have self-confidence and inspire it in others. Be knowledgeable. If your business revolves around sales, you need to know your product front and back. And lastly, the ability to recognize and foster talent is key. It's the best way to create a pleasant and efficient work environment where people feel empowered and motivated.

Has your approach to leadership changed over the years?

Grossé:



It hasn't changed much. I've been in management since I was 23, and I got it early on, and understood how to deal with people. I got lucky. It's a very simple approach: Focus on people. I'm approachable, I do a lot of reaching out, walking around and talking to people.

Posillico:



The biggest thing I had to learn to do was to delegate more. I was the type of guy that felt like I had to do everything myself. Sometimes I wouldn't have as much trust in some of the people underneath me to do what I needed done. That just took time to bring the right people in that I had the confidence in.

Milillo:



In the early stages of the business, my management style was a lot more hands-on. I was doing more of what I call "managing of the jobs." I was doing most of the work myself. Now, I'm at a place where I've moved from managing the jobs and having to do every step myself to overseeing the processes and managing the people doing them — my team.

What are the most challenging aspects of leading a business?

Grossé:



It's the messaging, to ensure that everyone understands the purpose, and ours is enriching lives. It's not just about product orientation, rates and service. A teller can help cheer someone up when they're having a bad day. We experiment, we do a lot of surveys and we make sure people are getting the right message.

Posillico:



Being able to continue to be successful in an extremely competitive business. You've got to have a lot of self-discipline to not chase jobs because you need the work. On the other hand, you've got to make sure that you're getting the right type of work and keep getting work to keep your people employed.

Milillo:



Making sure every part of it runs smoothly. If one part of the chain or one part of the process is off, it can delay our entire schedule as a company and set back our timetables as to when jobs are supposed to be completed. This is most challenging during times of growth.

-Victor Ocasio