

TOM DECOTIIS, PHD

ADORED

THE
LEADER
YOUR TEAM
NEEDS YOU
TO BE

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I have been immersed in the world of leadership for more than fifty years. As a result, I have worked with a whole lot of leaders. A handful of them were incompetent – some breathtakingly so. These leaders did more harm than good, and never grew beyond being what I call an *appointed leader*. It was always a breath of fresh air to the team when one of these misfits was replaced. I, probably like you, have typically worked with what I call *accepted leaders*. These are leaders with the best of intentions who care about their team, invariably work hard, and usually get the job done. There is no question that these *accepted leaders* make a difference; however, they are not *the* difference maker in terms of the team's success. They're more like cogs in a leadership wheel; one more successor in a chain of succession — each one moving the team a bit more forward.

Then, there were those leaders I had the pleasure of working with who made me wonder: “How did they do that?” and who were described by others as “A difference maker.” They blew me away with their energy, insight, and ability to get people to enthusiastically and consistently not only perform at their best, but to be their best. They were memorable for the right reasons, trusted, and inevitably lifted the spirits of their team. I needed a label for these leaders, but words like “great” or “excellent” just did not seem to cover what they were able to accomplish, whether it was at the level of a team or an entire enterprise.

It occurred to me to come at the challenge of labeling these leaders from a team member perspective. Take, for instance, the *appointed leader*. You join a company through its management training program, the Army through Officer Candidate School, become an Assistant Professor by virtue of having earned a PhD degree, and so forth. All of these avenues mean nothing in terms of acceptance by your team. You are just another face until you prove yourself worthy of the respect of the team. When the team does that, you have been *accepted* as its leader, but not necessarily embraced.

Since I was writing a book about leadership, I needed a label that would, hopefully, catch your attention. I tried several, with *Leader of Character*, being among my favorites. But I could see that it was a clunky label and unlikely to pull the reader in to wanting to know more about this leadership thing. It helped that I have a dear friend who shares my love of words. While he's not exactly obsessed with using the correct word in the right place, he's pretty close. Okay, he's obsessed. I won't tell you his name, as he is a very well-known business biggie, but Dick Rivera would have to fade a lot of heat from his friends if these obsessions were known.

Dick and I have been friends for more than forty years and love our little debates over which word is best – particularly, when there is a glass, or two, of fine wine to heat up the discussion. So, I laid my choice on him: *Adored Leader*. I like how it fits the dictionary definition of *adore* on the title page of this book: “to regard with the utmost esteem, love, and respect; honor.” Dick was not having it!

I received an email from him forcefully suggesting that I change “adored” to “revered.” Dick immediately sought the cover of a big gun: The late Samuel I. Hayakawa – a world

renowned semanticist, before his time in the U.S. Senate, and a mutual hero of ours. Despite the flak received from Dick and his playing the Sam-card, there are some good reasons I stayed with adored. First, adored has the nice iteration of being one of three “A’s,” as in “Appointed,” “Accepted,” and “Adored” Leader. Nifty symmetry, and kind of catchy, if you ask me. Sort of the Triple-A of leadership!

Second, as Sam pointed out (and I reminded Dick), revered is part of a group of words that includes adore, idealize, reverence, venerate, and worship. All of these words “refer to the warm respect and honor with which one may regard an admirable person or institution. Revere is less formal and less warm in tone . . . is more appropriate for an institution or idea than a person (emphasis added by me). . . . Adore suggests the most tenderness and warmth of any of these words.” So, with the blessing of Sam, I am sticking with adored. An Adored Leader is someone you regard with the utmost esteem, love, and respect; you honor them for their character, accomplishment, and contribution to others.

So, there you have it: *An Adored Leader is held close in our emotions*. The Adored Leader is more than a leader, they become a part of our lives to be remembered and cherished. My hope is that this book will provide you with the enthusiasm and grit it takes to put yourself among Adored Leaders by consciously choosing a path to honorable character and learning the skills of leadership.