

ON THE BRINK OF MADNESS

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A LEADER BREAKS ALL THE RULES?



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At the beginning of the movie, a voice narrates: “You know the story. A crack of lightning. A mad genius. An unholy creation.”

Despite the ominous opening, *Victor Frankenstein* is more than just another sci-fi horror film. This movie teaches us about the importance of passion, social support systems and staying true to our values when it comes to leadership.

PASSION IN LEADERSHIP

How does Victor Frankenstein, the radical scientist hell-bent on pursuing groundbreaking research (figuratively and literally) show us the importance of passion in leadership?

He exudes energy and excitement when he talks about his work, spittle and all! This raw energy rubs off on Igor Strausman, a gifted surgeon whom he meets, and who eventually helps him achieve his vision of creating life after death.

Similarly, as leaders – be it in our schools or workplaces, it is important to have passion in all that we do. Passionate enthusiasm has the ability to draw people to us and our ideas. It enables us to seamlessly influence others to join forces with us and to help us achieve our visions.

However, being overly passionate can be dangerous too. *Victor Frankenstein* is a classic tale of how being too passionate about something to the point that it becomes one’s sole focus in life can have devastating effects.

Frankenstein is so convinced that he had stumbled upon an amazing discovery that he refuses to listen to the cautionary messages of those around him.

Therefore, always remember that while passion in leadership is important, moderation is key and motive counts for a lot. As leaders, if we have a vision that is consuming almost all of our time and energy to the point that it negatively affects other areas in our life, perhaps it would be wiser to take a step back and re-evaluate our passions.



Victor Frankenstein stars James McAvoy (right) and Daniel Radcliffe. Photo: Twentieth Century Fox

IMPORTANCE OF A SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

The movie teaches us about the importance of having a strong support system in order to keep our passions in check.

Lorelai, the trapeze artist who befriends Igor, is the voice of reason that keeps Igor grounded in what he is doing. As a friend, she is honest with him when she realises that Frankenstein and Igor’s experiments are going overboard.

Similarly, as leaders, it is often easy to be engulfed in wanting to achieve our visions that we blind ourselves to other things. Therefore, it is important to surround ourselves with good friends who have our well-being at heart and who can help us stay on track.

Igor proves that he is a true friend to Frankenstein when he decides to return and look for him despite an earlier parting of ways. As a friend, he feels concern and wants to see that Frankenstein is alright.

Even though it is dangerous, he pushes on and tries to reason with Frankenstein. Throughout the process, he does not give up and is there for his friend at the most trying moments.

Therefore, always remember that good friends are important when it comes to leadership as they are the ones who

will be brave enough to tell us the hard truth. They will also be the ones who will advise us when we need to re-evaluate ourselves.

STAYING TRUE TO YOUR VALUES

Having passion in leadership enables us to influence others to join forces with us, and it teaches us about the importance of staying true to our values.

For example, although Igor is initially excited to work alongside Frankenstein, he pulls back when he learns the truth about Frankenstein’s ultimate vision. He is horrified that Frankenstein is going to bring to life to something that does not exist in reality.

Lorelai encourages Igor to make a firm stand against what he does not believe in. Likewise, as leaders, we need to stay true to our values. If we believe that something is not right, we owe it to ourselves to speak up – even if we feel indebted to someone because of what they have done for us.

What’s interesting is how Frankenstein teaches us to respect the opinions of others, no matter how hard. When Igor finally makes his stand, Frankenstein graciously allows him to leave.

As leaders, we should remember to stay true to our values and to respect the values that others hold. Change is inevitable.

It is important for leaders to recognise that people’s direction in life changes as they grow. Though their values may initially align with ours, there may come a time when their values diverge. And when or if that happens, we should be gracious enough to respect their decisions and let them go.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

To sum up, having passion for the things we do makes us better leaders. Having a good support system is essential in maintaining our well-being. Let’s all remember to keep our friends close by despite the mad rush to go up the corporate ladder.

As leaders, we may be put in situations where our values misalign with others. When such a situation arises, we must find the courage to make a stand for what we believe in.

Additionally, be willing to let go of those whose values no longer align with ours. It is essential in ensuring that one’s working environment is compatible for everyone.

■ *Caroline Regina is a psychology graduate from Sunway University who used to dream of becoming a scientist (not a mad scientist) when she was younger. To read more of her articles, go to www.leaderonomics.com*



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