

ACQUIRE ESSENTIAL SKILLS OF GREAT LEADERSHIP

CORE ESSENTIALS OF LEADERSHIP

WHAT LEADERSHIP IS, WHAT IT ISN'T,
AND HOW TO DEVELOP
THE LEADERSHIP CHARACTER

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INTRODUCTION

Where there is no vision, the people perish. PROVERBS 29:18

PERHAPS MORE SO than in any era of human history, modern society has placed a pronounced emphasis on the study of leadership. Few foci have consumed the collective interest of university researchers, think tanks, executive coaches, corporate consultants, business magnates and internet bloggers more than identifying the special mix of qualities and actions that produce and sustain strong leadership.

The topic's currency is obvious enough. At no time in our historical annals has there been a greater demand for capable, dynamic leadership – at least on such broad a scale – as there is today. Modern society has engendered the vast proliferation of large organizational structures, including governments, business corporations, and educational institutions. Each of these entities depends heavily on the skills and successes of key leaders to drive their enterprises forward. Logically, such organizations make the study and recruitment of effective management an essential, ongoing effort, and invest heavily in programs and services to nurture and assess their chief executives.

As I see it, leadership matters today more than ever before, in part for the following reasons.

SHIFTING, LESS STRUCTURED ORGANIZATIONS

Today's work environment is more agile, dexterous, and virtual than ever before, with flat or horizontal reporting becoming more commonplace. Leading can be harder in less structured environments.

NAVIGATING IN UNCHARTERED WATERS

We live at a time of constant change, with an ever-increasing demand for product development and acceptance in a fast-paced global economy. It can be tough to lead when you're not 100% sure where you're going.

HEIGHTENED EXPECTATIONS

Today's stakeholders are better informed than in the past. They are less inclined to tolerate error and wait patiently for evidence of success. Leaders today are expected to hit the ground running, but do so with short leashes.

TOO MANY FAILURES

We have all observed longstanding bastions of stability, such as government and big business, fail before our eyes. Traditional organizational values have come under question and we often times seem to lack a moral compass by which to determine right and wrong.

These challenges, as well as many others, can make organizational leadership a daunting, perplexing task.

IN THIS VOLUME we will explore what leadership is (as well as what it isn't,) and discuss how leaders can develop the kind of character that will help them to gain others' respect and support and increase production. Of course, there is much more to leadership than this, including developing a vision, managing change, supervising personnel and confronting under-performers. But the first thing that any leader or aspiring leader needs to understand is the concept of leadership, the underlying theory and attributes which frame leaders' thoughts and actions.

IT'S ALL ABOUT INFLUENCE

Leadership is influence; nothing more, nothing less. JOHN C. MAXWELL

I LIKE TO THINK of leadership as comprising two primary, related components: social influence and the maximization of others' efforts. Influence is about winning people over to a new way of thinking and practice, through questioning, idea sharing, collaboration, and modeling. It emphasizes persuasion and motivation over coercion.

Influence occurs primarily through emotional connections, such as when we share triumphant or challenging times together. It also develops when leaders routinely demonstrate feelings of appreciation, care, concern, and empathy.

Simon Sinek is a best-selling author on team-building. He learned some of his core leadership beliefs from a conversation with Lt. Gen. George Flynn, a Marine Corps official. Flynn was explaining what makes the corps so extraordinarily tight-knit, to the point that they willingly trust their lives to one another. He told Sinek that when Marines line up for their food each day, the most junior officers go first, followed in rank order. Their leaders eat last. Such procedures are not recorded in the Marine Corp handbook or procedural code. Nor are they communicated at roll call. It's just the way that Marine leadership teaches responsibility.

Many people think leadership to be about rank, power and privilege. Marines, however, maintain that true leadership is the willingness to place others' needs above your own. That's why Sinek titled his 2014 book *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't*. True leadership, he writes, is about empowering others to achieve things they didn't believe possible.

By prioritizing the well-being of their people, exceptional organizations motivate their workers to give everything they've got to advance the organization. Peter Drucker once described it as, "*lifting a person's vision to high sights... raising... a person's performance to a higher standard... (going) beyond its normal limitations.*"

IN ADDITION TO the aforementioned qualities, strong leaders possess other attributes that help them achieve great success.

DRIVEN

Great leaders are driven to succeed. Drive is the engine that turns ideas into action and action into results. Drive also motivates us to forge ahead, to advance in the face of opposition, disappointment and setbacks, and to reach new levels of achievement.

CREDIBLE

Strong leaders are credible, which means that others believe in them and their message. They are seen as experts in their field and deserve to be taken seriously. Credibility does not develop overnight; it occurs when leaders regularly inspire trust in others and demonstrate great personal capacity for their tasks.

COMFORTABLE TAKING RISK

Leadership requires regular risk taking. Everything from budgeting to staffing to programming carries some element of risk. This is certainly true for the more complex, risky responsibilities that define leadership, such as crafting a new vision and shifting course. Effective leaders understand that risk taking is central to their jobs and are willing to make tough decisions as the situation requires.

BUILD FROM STRENGTH

Great leaders are able to pinpoint what they and their company do best and stay focused on building from that strength.

Steve Jobs, the late Apple CEO, found a company in dysfunction when he returned to Apple in 1997, twelve years after being fired. His extensive observations revealed a rudderless ship that lacked discipline and focus. Jobs called together his managers and told them to stop all production. He then drew a box with four quadrants. Over the two columns he wrote “desktop” and “laptop.” He labeled the two rows “home” and “business.” He said that Apple would create the best products in each of those four categories and nothing more, at least for the time being. We all know how the story turned out from there.

SUMMARY

LEADERSHIP CONSISTS OF TWO PRIMARY COMPONENTS: SOCIAL INFLUENCE AND THE MAXIMIZATION OF OTHERS' EFFORTS.

INFLUENCE OCCURS THROUGH EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS.

ONE GREAT WAY TO CONNECT WITH OTHERS IS TO PLACE THEIR NEEDS ABOVE YOURS.

SUCCESSFUL LEADERS ARE ALSO DRIVEN, CREDIBLE, AND COMFORTABLE TAKING RISKS.

NEXT STEPS

Think about the people who have most influenced you. They could be a family member, a former teacher, a boss, or someone else in your life. Seek to identify how they influenced you and what allowed them (their qualities, position, etc.) to do so. Why did you want to follow them and accept their message?

Identify someone in your life that you would like to influence more, such as one of your coworkers. What can you do to motivate them to accept your leadership more willingly and follow your guidance?

Select one of the four qualities listed towards the end of the chapter (beginning with “Driven”). Using a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest score, what does a 10 look and feel like for that quality? What does a 1 look and feel like? Once you are clear, identify where you are as a leader within that range today. Then, think about the steps that you would need to take to raise your number to your goal.

Take, for example, “Credible.” Let’s say that you give yourself the score of 6. Now decide on where you want to get on the continuum, at least for the short haul. Then seek to determine the steps that would be required to go from a 6 to your target number.

LEADERSHIP IS NOT MANAGEMENT

You manage things; you lead people. REAR ADMIRAL GRACE MURRAY HOPPER

THE TERMS LEADER and manager are often used interchangeably. But are they the same? Most leadership experts say no. In *On Becoming a Leader*, consultant Warren Bennis composed a sizable list of distinctions between the two titles. Some of these differences are:

The manager administers; the leader innovates.

The manager maintains; the leader develops.

The manager focuses on systems and structure; the leader focuses on people.

The manager relies on control; the leader inspires trust.

The manager has a short-range view; the leader has a long-range perspective.

The manager asks how and when; the leader asks what and why.

The manager has his or her eye on the bottom line; the leader's eye is on the horizon.

The manager accepts the status quo; the leader challenges it.

The manager does things right; the leader does the right thing.

In *Leading Change*, Harvard professor John P. Kotter explains the difference as follows: “Management is a set of processes that keep an organization functioning... The processes are about planning, budgeting, staffing, clarifying jobs, measuring performance, and problem-solving when results did not go to plan. (Leadership, in contrast,) is about aligning people to the vision... (through) buy-in and communication, motivation and inspiration.”

This is not to suggest that we must replace all management with leadership. The two serve different, essential purposes. And we need to engage in both in order to ensure effective organizational function. The key for leaders is to be cognizant of when they are engaged in each aspect of their jobs and to aspire to be a leader first and foremost.

To again quote Kotter: “We need superb management. And we need more superb leadership. We need

to be able to make our complex organizations reliable and efficient. We need them to jump into the future – the right future – at an accelerated pace, no matter the size of the changes required to make that happen.”

It is through management that companies implement the ideas, actions and processes that lead to success. However, leaders are the ones that first develop the plan and chart the course. They also inspire their teams to take the necessary actions to ensure that their visions are actualized. The late Stephen Covey expressed the difference as follows: “*Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall.*”

SUMMARY

LEADERSHIP IS VERY DIFFERENT
THAN MANAGEMENT.

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT ALIGNING PEOPLE TO THE VISION,
WHILE MANAGEMENT HELPS KEEP THE ORGANIZATION
AND TEAM FUNCTIONING.

THE TWO ROLES SERVE DIFFERENT,
YET ESSENTIAL, PURPOSES.

NEXT STEPS

Reflect on the core differences between leaders and managers that we presented. Which one resonates with you most? Can you add other differences to the list?

Make a list of your primary workplace responsibilities and activities. Then determine whether they are primarily management or leadership oriented.

Ask yourself, “Do I prefer to manage or lead?” (Hint: which one do you do readily and which requires an external motivator?)

If you are a manager first and foremost, think of things that you can do to help you offer your team more leadership.

BUILD A LEADERSHIP CHARACTER

Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power. ABRAHAM LINCOLN

IN CONTEMPORARY CONTEXTS we have increasingly come to think of leaders as well-positioned people with strong connections. These men and women are in ample possession of intellect, charisma, power, and wealth. More often than not, we judge them (and, consequently, they judge themselves,) by what they have, or what they have been able to achieve in advancing their institution's bottom line. Rare are the leaders who we view primarily by their character and deeds, not to mention the qualitative impact that they make on others around them. Not surprisingly then, many leaders today focus more on what they can get from their positions of authority rather than on what they can give to the institutions and people that they lead.

Any attempt to define and portray leadership without discussing character is both limited and limiting. Character fundamentally shapes how we engage with others around us, what we value and care about, the things we act on and reinforce, and how we arrive at decisions.

Research shows that the very best leaders, the ones who have been successful in elevating their organizations to a sustained position atop their respective fields, are individuals who prioritize and exemplify such qualities as selflessness, care and consideration. They are humble and willing to admit error, on top of the other core managerial competencies that they possess.

In *From Good to Great*, author Jim Collins describes his quest to identify the qualities that made certain high profile companies particularly successful. He and his research team began the process with a list of nearly 1500 corporations. Through the use of growth-related criteria they narrowed the list down to a group of eleven truly "great" businesses. Additional research revealed that all eleven companies had a few particular things in common, including the fact that all were headed by what Collins and his team termed "Level 5 Leaders."

These leaders were all smart, shrewd, skilled and knowledgeable of their respective products and market. They were effective at developing and managing teams within their organization, establishing a vision, setting goals and meeting performance objectives. But so were many of the 1500 other CEOs in his study. One particular quality that set these Level 5 leaders apart from so many others in their peer group was the fact that they were recognized and admired by their coworkers for their noble character.

These Level 5 CEOs were humble and did not pursue success for their personal glory. Some were quiet and introverted but remained undaunted when the need arose for them to make difficult, even risky, decisions. They were caring of others, while also maintaining a burning, passionate drive to advance their respective cause. And because they were so exceptional in their care and concern, other leaders within their organizations began to mimic their deeds and thinking processes, further advancing their respective company's cause.

For years, leadership programs have emphasized strength and decisiveness, believing that people wanted their leaders to be tough, courageous, knowledgeable, and self-confident. In contrast, humility, care and other similar traits were not seen as desirable leadership qualities. After all, how could modest, self-effacing, think-others-first executives motivate workers and influence change?

However, a cursory review of some of the world's most successful leaders presents character in a very different light. Ancient leaders such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, as well as some more recent examples like Washington, Lincoln, Gandhi, and Mandela, all moved mountains and shaped modern history without heated rhetoric or an inflated sense of self-importance.

Genuine humility and care are indicators of a leader's inner strength, as well as his deep knowledge and self-fulfillment. Such leaders view their roles as opportunities to serve others. They can often better motivate others to listen and follow their example knowing that the leader is not motivated by glory, greed and self-aggrandizement. Humble, caring leaders willingly acknowledge errors (theirs or their organization's) and change course as needed. It's never about them; the focus remains on getting the job done, in the best way possible. When their actions or decisions are criticized, they remain open to change and growth. These leaders take pride in their achieve-

ments, but mainly as a platform to bring their people together to do even greater things. Few have expressed it better than legendary University of Alabama head football coach, Paul “Bear” Bryant. Bryant would often say that, “If anything goes bad, I did it. If anything goes semi-good, we did it. If anything goes really good, then you did it.”

SUMMARY

LEADERS ARE OFTEN JUDGED BY THEIR INTELLECT
AND WEALTH, NOT THEIR CHARACTER.

CHARACTER PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE
IN LEADERSHIP.

ALL OF HISTORY’S TRULY-GREAT LEADERS
WERE PEOPLE OF STELLAR CHARACTER.

NEXT STEPS

*To gain added clarity about the quality of your character, consider taking a character self-assessment like Ken Blanchard's **Trust Works**. After you have completed it, ask others in your inner circle and some a bit further out to do the same. This will help you learn what others think about your character.*

Another option is to take a 360 degree feedback assessment, though they are more involved and ask for more than a person's character.

LEAD ETHICALLY, FROM THE VALUES UP

If a man's associates find him guilty of being phony, if they find that he lacks forthright integrity, he will fail. DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

I REMEMBER THE COMMENT as if it were yesterday. As a high school teacher, I had been invited to a school weekend “spirit” event for students and faculty at an area hotel. The facility sat on a sprawling property and its layout was unconventional to say the least, which made navigation from one place to another a bit challenging. At one point, I pointed the group that I was with in the wrong direction before someone realized the error. Not too pleased with his incompetent navigator, this guy quipped, “at least you weren’t tasked to lead the Jews through the Sinai desert.” Let’s just say that I felt very un-Moses like at that moment.

We noted above that a key component of leadership is influence. Leaders understand that their role is to inspire others and lead them towards a desired outcome. But how can leaders themselves be sure that they have set along the correct path, particularly when there appears to be more than one viable way forward?

One way is to lead from values. Values are the core components of a person’s deepest beliefs, the concepts that they hold most dear and should drive decision making. When a leader takes the time to identify her deepest values, she is likelier to remain consistent in her actions and choices. Moreover, if she is effective in articulating her values then others will understand her reasoning and, more often than not, be more inclined to support her process.

As leaders, we are given many opportunities to choose between possible actions and reactions. While we hopefully have our own values clearly articulated to drive such decision making, our colleagues and coworkers don’t always share those same values and priorities.

Creating a shared sense of values may not be as challenging as would first appear. For starters, gather your team together for a conversation. Offer them a values list. Focus on company values

and narrow down the list to a core group that can help direct future decision making. Then, send the list around for clarification and confirmation. Once confirmed, publicize the list. At a future meeting, present scenarios so that everyone can discuss the situation in the context of the values they have selected.

Say, for example, the company has embraced a respectful work environment that prioritizes personal well-being and family over the endless pursuit of profits. Present a scenario in which these values are threatened, by such things as harsh, competitive marketplace conditions or demanding clients. Ask the group to identify the challenge to their values and how they would expect their leadership to respond. In this way, they will crystallize their position and be prepared when the inevitable conflicts arise.

Recently, a Japanese manufacturer transitioned into its third generation of leadership. The founder's grandson who now runs the company discovered that because he was significantly younger than many of the company's managers, they were not willing to follow his leadership. The young CEO responded by establishing a dozen corporate values. Then he spent time working with team members to ensure understanding of and respect for the values. He regularly tells his managers, "We don't make decisions based on what I say; we make them based on what the values say." And they listen better as a result.

Values-based leadership begins with the leader. You cannot expect your team to perform with character and integrity without first setting the example. As leader, your team looks to you for guidance and direction. You must know and have the capacity to articulate your own values as well as your organization's values. And then you must live by them. What you do, not what you say, demonstrates most what you care about.

A reward system for team members who consistently act according to the company values will reinforce desired outcomes and give you a forum to promote positive conduct. Whenever possible, share the good word about what your colleagues have achieved, or how they are walking the values walk and enhancing your organization as a result.

It is also necessary to establish consequences for team members who don't follow the organiza-

tion's guidelines. We all strive to be good and act in accordance with our values. But sometimes we fall short, and must be held accountable to prevent slippage.

Values, unlike leaders, are eternal. When a leader has effectively used values – her own and others' – as her starting point, she can be assured that her “fingerprints and footprints” will remain behind long after her departure, guiding people steadily along a values-driven pathway.

SUMMARY

LEADERS OUGHT TO LEAD FROM VALUES.

VALUES ARE THE CORE COMPONENTS OF A
PERSON'S DEEPEST BELIEFS, THE CONCEPTS
THEY HOLD MOST DEAR.

CREATE A SHARED SENSE OF VALUES
AT THE WORKPLACE AND LET THEM DRIVE
DECISION MAKING.

VALUES, UNLIKE LEADERS, ARE ETERNAL.

NEXT STEPS

Identify your core personal values.

Work with your team to pinpoint and articulate your shared values, the ones that will frame your business and leadership decisions. Make sure to publicize them for all to see, learn, and internalize.

Where appropriate, communicate how decisions were influenced by the company's values.

Develop a simple system of rewards and consequences to motivate others to live up to the values that you have established.

CONCLUSION

Leaders are much more than managers. Sure, they have to implement policy and oversee performance, but leaders are also visionaries and influencers, people who find ways to inspire others to see what they see and seek what they seek.

Great leaders are people of great character. They are strong and forceful as needed, but find ways to balance their strength with their values and with their care. Legendary American General Douglas MacArthur may have described this best when he suggested that, “A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader, but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent.”

In this volume, we have offered examples of what leaders must do to engage and inspire others. It is our hope that the ideas and strategies contained therein will provide additional insight and tools to help leaders optimize their performance and motivate their coworkers to new heights of achievement and satisfaction.



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