



Elucidation

In this edition of the Elucidate X bi-weekly chunk of prose, **Gordan Domlija** offers advice on how to succeed when stepping up into a leadership role

How to get ahead in leadership

Why have I written this, you may ask. Well, quite a few people have reached out to ask me recently for advice about achieving leadership competency, not sure why, but they have. Being me, I've been very happy to share my experiences and observations. The feedback has been universally positive, the honest and objective mentorship has helped individuals adjust to new challenges and align their life aspirations to work. So, I thought it warranted capturing this apex advice in digital blog format for the benefit of this and future generations.

Preparing for change

While there has been much disruption in the corporate world in recent years, new paradigms and the like, what is certain is that the wheels of industry have kept turning, people have left jobs and others have taken their place. A new generation is stepping into leadership roles, not necessarily any better trained or equipped than the last generation in being able to handle what will be thrown at them.

I always found it interesting that when I got a promotion, on the basis of doing a great job in a particular role, with the promotion came a new and often completely different set of responsibilities - "you are awesome at problem solving and unlocking brand value for clients, Gordan" ... "so here's a promotion to a role which is primarily finance, HR and admin", is a conversation that could well have taken place.

Now I appreciate this scenario might be quite industry specific, but it seems fairly common to be promoted into role for which you have no formal training, experience or preparation. It can be daunting, overwhelming, and create imposter syndrome. However this is progress, your opportunity to climb the corporate ladder, learn new skills and if you are lucky be a big step on the road to a lifetime of doing something you love. So, you need to prepare yourself for the change. I remember two things my boss said to me when I took my first CEO role.

The first was "are you sure you want to do this?", in response to which I fired off every pre-rehearsed reason why I was absolutely the right person for this role. This was met with a dead eyed "be careful what you wish for". And that was it, a pat on the back and off I went to do the job. I learned by doing, I did some things fantastically well, and others, well, not so much. So here I some things that I picked up, and that I think are useful to know as you head into a new leadership role.

Top tips in list format

Lists are great, they allow you to pick items that resonate and ignore others. It's not an exhaustive list, I have more in the locker, but if you like any of them, feel free to use them, no charge.



Trees are symbols of strength, individuality and expression, calmness, growth and the interconnectedness of everything.

That is why it appears in this margin. That, and also the fact that it is a royalty-free icon.

There's no hierarchy to the list, each point was important to my development and helped me to build a successful culture and business, though possibly I would have got their quicker if I had a list like this to guide me from the outset. Enjoy.

1. Understand the numbers - get stuck into the P&L and learn how the finance community talk about it. Be the newbie, ask questions if you don't understand. Your curiosity will help you quickly establish what is in your power to control, and what is not.
2. Learn other disciplines across the business - whatever role you are moving up from, take time to learn and understand what everyone else in the business does. No matter what industry you are in, understanding and acknowledging the contribution and value of each function is critical to building culture and performance.
3. Admin - get on top of it. There's invariably tons of it. Organise yourself and others. Write a list of deliverables, timelines and responsibilities for regular reports and data. If the admin flows without issue it saves you valuable time and effort in chasing things down and sending apologies for missed deadlines.
4. Empower your team - one of the biggest mistakes I have seen from people moving into leadership positions is that they start taking every decision unilaterally, because they believe it's important to visibly demonstrate that they are the boss. Leadership, as is well documented, is about empowerment, not about isolation. Empowerment pays back very quickly.
5. Delegate - I'm the worst person in the world to give this advice, but my goodness is this important. People are capable, let them learn and grow. They might do it differently than you do, but that's ok, sit back, enjoy the ride.
6. "I don't know" - Don't bullshit answers, it's ok not to know stuff, if you don't know something say you will review and revert. If you don't understand something say so, asking questions and taking advice doesn't make you stupid, it makes you smart.

7. Listen - if you are spending any less than 80% of your time listening, you are talking too much.
Listen - Ask - Listen Again - Understand - Act.
8. Explain your decisions - you will need to make tough decisions that some people in your company won't like. You can't make everyone happy with every decision, but you can take the time to explain your decisions, why that will be the course of action, and why it is for the good of the business and all its people that everyone gets behind it. Some people will still not agree, but everyone will respect the transparency and openness.
9. Be generous with your time - make sure you are available to everyone, at every level. Prioritise this over other deliverables, if someone goes out of their way to talk to you, it is important. You will learn more how to improve the work environment and what help people really need. This builds trust and it pays forward in your organisation.
10. Behave your values - be kind, be empathetic, be fair to all, but also don't tolerate bad behaviour, wherever it comes from. That only creates resentment and toxicity, so whether it is unreasonable clients or colleagues, take action. It's a tough part of the job, can be detrimental and destabilising in the short term, but will preserve longer term goals and culture, and you always sleep a whole lot better at night knowing you have tried to do the right thing.



It's the same royalty-free tree from the previous page. Still a wonderfully poignant symbol.

If you would like to discuss further

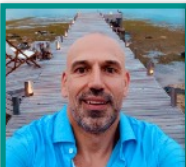
I hope you found this useful and informative. I would love to hear your thoughts and comments, or set up a time to further discuss how to build culture and a thriving business.

You can contact me personally at:

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Gordan is a highly successful, awarded and transformative CEO. He has worked in global and regional roles in London, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore. He is the twice winner and current holder of Campaign Asia-Pacific CEO of the Year.



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