

CHOOSE to Lead: Lead to Victory
Turning Leadership Intention Into Practice
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Welcome to Victory Leadership, where good leadership leads to victory.

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Here we help emerging and established leaders win through clarity, confidence, and growth.

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00:00:24.880 - 00:39:45.520
Let's get started.

Welcome to the Leadership Pit Stop, where we help emerging and established leaders win through clarity, confidence and growth.

My name is Earl Erie with Victory Leadership, and today we will arrive at the final episode of the Victory Leadership to Lead series.

But I want to be careful with that word final, because while this episode is the final episode of series, leadership development itself itself does not have a final episode.

There is no moment where someone receives a trophy or crosses the finish line and says, I have completed leadership.

You may get some of those accolades and physical representation of accomplishments along the way, but it just means that you've endured, not have come to a concluding or a finishing from the perspective of done.

And that's because leadership keeps changing and people keep changing.

Teams change, the organization change technology, circumstances, and we ourselves change.

We are changed by the people we interact with, what we see going on in the world around us.

And when that happens, we are continuously evolving and our leadership must continue to evolve with it.

So today is not about arrival.

It is about continuation.

Title of today's episode is choose to Lead Leadership to Victory.

Turning leadership intention into practice.

And unlike several previous episodes, choose is not another acronym.

It is a verb.

It is an invitation, a decision.

It's a leadership choice.

And that choice has to be renewed regularly and continuously through practice.

So let's pull in today's leadership pit stop.

Here's today's green flag moment.

Leadership may begin with a choice.

Effective leadership is sustained through practice.

Leadership growth continues through reflection, feedback, adjustment, and another opportunity to try again.

And that is today's message.

Choose, Practice.

Reflect.

Adjust.

Repeat.

Just like the old Champlue commercials when they were looking how to increase their sales.

Wash, rinse, repeat, Take another lap.

Leadership is a choice.

Many people do not wake up one morning and randomly decide how to become a leader today.

Often someone else sees something first.

A supervisor may encourage them.

A mentor identifies potential someone recommends them for a role, or an organization promotes them.

A team begins looking for them for guidance before they even have the title.

And that's just one way though.

Or those are a few ways.

That list is by no means exhaustive.

There may be some influence behind that encouragement and an opportunity.

But eventually the individual still has to make the choice.

Will I accept this responsibility?

What will I do with the influence that I now have?

How will that reverent influence in my own personal influence?

How will they interact?

How will I treat people?

What will I do when things become difficult, and how will I respond when I make a mistake or when others make a mistake.

This is all around how to continue, grow and moving forward.

And perhaps asking the most important question, what kind of leader am I choosing to become?

Because leadership is not simply something that we possess, it is something that we practice.

Great man theory has a tendency to suggest that people can be a born leader.

And because I am hesitant to apply absolutes to the human condition, I am not denying that that is a possibility.

Some people just may be very charismatic.

They're very quick to think and through that they may possess certain natural tendencies of their personality that lean towards the characteristics we like to see in leaders.

Some people need to develop that in leadership is a teachable and a learnable skill.

It is something that we choose to practice.

So if we look back on the To Lead series, we look back on our journey.

First, we started with room to lead because leadership requires capacity.

It needs wiggle room to operate.

If every moment is consumed with reacting, processing, catching up and surviving, there may be very little room left for leadership.

You're no longer building, you're just putting out fires to try to keep a structure from burning down.

Then we moved on to serve to lead.

And once leaders have that room, how will they make use of it?

Servant leadership asked us to influence other people so that they can become stronger, wiser, more capable, and better prepared to contribute.

Then came care to lead.

Serving people does not mean avoiding hard conversations.

Candor tells people what they need to hear.

And the care, the kindness helps them to hear it without losing their dignity.

Then from there we explored grow.

Smart to lead.

Because potential is not enough, leaders can help turn people's potential into progress.

Grow creates the movement.

Smart creates attraction.

Then we reach trust to lead.

And trust requires vulnerability.

People extend trust when that vulnerability begins to feel that it is worth the risk.

We explored telling the truth with care, repairing what we rupture or what was ruptured, understanding the risk, supporting through consistency and taking the next trustworthy action and then looping back for another lap.

Which brings us here.

Choose to lead.

These are tools, not destinations.

And I want to make that clear about every model that we discuss.

None of them represents a finished leader.

Room is not the answer to every leadership situation.

Neither is serve care, go smart or trust.

They are tools.

And many other useful leadership frameworks are available.

There's great information out there on leadership development, leadership philosophy and ways of doing things in leadership situations differ.

We've got different people, cultures, industry, challenges, levels of urgency, relationships and histories.

Good leaders develop enough self awareness and situational awareness to ask, what does this moment need?

Maybe it needs room.

Maybe it needs care.

What about coaching?

What about repair?

Maybe another tool completely outside of this series is more appropriate.

The goal is not to become dependent on an acronym.

The goal is to become more intentional.

Knowing is not doing.

And here is one of the most important lessons about leadership development.

Just because we know that's only part of it.

That's the exposure that brings the awareness.

But we haven't done anything yet.

I can explain servant leadership and still fail to serve someone.

When I'm under pressure, I can understand emotional intelligence and still allow frustration to drive my response.

I can teach psychological safety and still become defensive.

When someone challenges me, I can say that trust my you know that it matters.

But I can still fail to follow through and not follow up.

Now don't get me wrong.

Knowing matters and learning matters.

Studying and reading in the research and the training, all of these things matter.

But eventually leadership has to leave the classroom.

It has to leave the podcast.

It has to leave the book.

It has to leave the PowerPoint.

And it has to become behavior.

And that is when development becomes real.

So let's begin the cycle.

So choose.

So to ask ask what leadership behavior does this situation require?

Think about the person, the relationship, the outcome in the context.

Think about your own emotional state and then make an intentional choice.

That may sound simple, it might sound difficult.

But compare that to reacting just automatically.

If we accidentally touch a hot surface, we don't have to think about moving our contact away from that surface.

So if your hand touches something hot, probably just jerk your hand away.

And not necessarily proactively think about it.

You've reacted.

You didn't respond.

You reacted.

Our main reaction often comes from a habit, at times built in and other times it is learned.

Pressure, fear, frustration, and past experiences, ego.

Or just simply speed these things down that we choose.

Give us a moment to become intentional.

We do.

We do something.

Are we going to ask ourselves the questions?

What am I trying to accomplish?

And what does this person need?

Why does you know or why not?

Why does the work exist and what does it matter?

That response aligns with the leader that I would want to become.

And when you ask that question, then you choose.

Now you practice.

Do something.

Have the conversation, delegate it, coach it, listen, clarify, apologize, reorganize.

This list is by no means exhaustive.

You want to set a boundary, remove a barrier, keep a promise.

Leadership development requires behavior.

It is a relationship that we build.

It is a combination of facts and stories.

The stories drive our emotional entanglement with the situation, but the facts are what we can bring into play.

Because people may do things perfectly other times may stumble.

You might phrase something poorly so that didn't come out right.

And you might realize halfway through the conversation that your original assumption was wrong.

That does not mean that the development failed.

That may be the development is actually happening.

Practice gives us information.

So after we move through the action, we reflect and we ask ourselves, what happened?

What worked?

What did not?

What surprised me?

What emotion was I carrying and what assumptions did I make?

And maybe most importantly, what did I learn?

Did I learn anything?

Did that behavior reflect the leader that I want to become or that I endeavor or try to become?

Then ask one of those most important leadership questions, and this is probably one of the most important questions of this series.

What was it like for other people to be led by me in that moment?

Sit with that one.

Think about it.

Because leadership does not exist only in our intentions.

It's also in the way other people experience it.

So if the intentions versus the impact, what's the difference?

Is there a difference?

I may intend to empower you, so I have a motive, but you might experience abandonment.

So I help move you along your way by withdrawing when you need me most.

My intentions were to build you up, but instead it tore you down.

I may intend to create a sense of urgency so that we can get moving, but you might panic.

I may intend to be direct, but you might think that you're being disrespected.

I think that I'm helping, but you feel that you're being micromanaged and not trusted to carry out the task, whatever the objectives are, on your own.

I might intend to protect the team, but you might experience it as covert or secrecy.

That does not mean that intentions do not matter.

Absolutely not.

Intentions matter greatly.

They are huge.

We discussed that during Care to Lead.

But intention is only one side of the leadership interaction.

Impact is the other.

Effective leaders become curious about both what did I intend and what did they experience?

What happened in the space between those two?

That space is full of learning opportunities.

So ask for feedback.

Bilateral feedback.

Leaders give feedback, but they also need it.

There was a study that was done on search engines where the request was around the topic of feedback.

So when you look at the concept of feedback, out of 100%, 90% of the requests were on how to give it.

Leaders or people responsible for giving it were trying to discover the best way to deliver feedback to the intended recipient that only 10% was on how to ask for feedback.

We are more concerned about delivering the message in a way that is has a greater chance of being received and accepted than we are to ask others for their feedback.

But leaders need that.

Ask people, what did I do that helped?

What could have I done differently?

Was there anything that was unclear about my approach?

What did you need that you did not receive?

What should I reconsider?

And again, this is another list that is by no means exhaustive, because receiving the feedback in of itself does not mean that you are surrendering judgment, because not every perception will be complete.

We have our perception and then we have the truth.

And there's a gap in between those.

And we try to narrow it as much as possible.

We don't want it to be such a wide chasm that we need to build a huge bridge.

We want to get them close enough so it's easy to step from one to the other.

People see situations from various perspectives.

And those perspectives come through living life, hearing things, seeing things, examples.

And that's exactly why feedback matters.

Especially if somebody does not understand the reality because they're just not available or have been provided with enough information for that perception to be complete or to be the smallest possible gap to the truth.

So another perspective can give us information that we could not produce by ourselves.

So I said, well, what do you think?

Give me your feedback, Tell me what does it look like from your point of view, and then wait for the learning.

Because those are learning opportunities.

They can be emotionally charged.

Yes, at times we may fear asking for feedback that somebody might actually tell us.

And if there are any unaddressed or unhealed pain that exists, then consider that the feedback may not be very eloquently presented.

It is emotionally charged.

But we cannot stand outside of ourselves and experience our own leadership the way that somebody else does.

We need other people to do that.

We need them to tell us, then we can adjust.

If the approach worked, then reinforce it.

If it almost worked, then let's refine it down.

If it failed, well, what did we learn?

We just learned another way not to do it.

But if we move too quickly, then what do we need to do to slow down?

And if we avoided it for too long, then what are the things that can help us to move to action?

We also need these things, the very things that our team needs to be successful at what we're asking them to do.

We need these things as well.

They may show up or be applied or executed in a slightly different way, but we still need them we all need them.

The goal is not to protect the original plan.

The goal is to improve the leadership outcome.

So if that means adjusting the plan, it's just like navigating.

You make small incremental adjustments to make certain that you can take the most efficient route possible.

And if a storm arises and it gets in the way, you may need to adjust your course so that you can move around the danger.

There are times when you might need to go through the danger, but you also need to make adjustments so that you can do so with the best possible chance of making it through and continuing your journey.

The need to do this is great, and this is where humility becomes practical.

And then we repeat, we take another lap.

As cars are going around the road course and moving back and forth to try to get the best position that will incrementally get to the point where they will win the race.

So maybe in this lap they're trailing behind, then in the next lap, they get a little bit further ahead.

And the idea is at the end of the race, they are the first ones to cross the finish line.

So in this case, each one of these attempts at learning, adjusting, we move through and then we repeat them.

We make the choices, we practice what we learned, we reflect, reflect on the outcome.

We then make adjustments and we repeat and we do it all over again.

If you think back to trust, to lead, the final T was not the finish line, it was the next lap.

And so, of course, that metaphor applies to leadership development itself.

Every lap teaches you something.

The track conditions may change, your position relevant to the other competitors changes.

There are certain tactics that may emerge, and the people around you may change and alter their strategy.

You learn something about your equipment, how far you can push it, how far you can extend the capabilities, things that you can try to get the most out of what you have available.

And then what are you learning as you creatively apply those solutions and try different things?

Where can you accelerate without spending out the car?

When coming out of a turn, you learn where you need patience.

Don't rush through it.

You got another lap to go, and there's no need to pretend that you've arrived.

You keep developing, you keep going on, you run another lap, and then really you start to see something emerge.

Here.

There's race car drivers that become known for particular strategies or how they advance and move forward and how they resonate with their.

With their pit crews and with ownership and management and all these different elements.

And that driver takes on a particular set of characteristics.

So what are those characteristics?

As a leader that you would want, what kind of leader do you want to become?

Not the title, not the level, and not how many people would report to you, but what kind of leader.

What should people experience?

Experience when they encounter your leadership, do they experience clarity, confidence, compassion, courage, consistency?

Do they grow?

Do they develop trust?

Do they find that you're fair?

You can be tough, but are you fair?

Are there, are you managing accountability effectively?

Of course you need them to be able to accomplish what it is that they're there as a part of their job specification.

But as a leader, have you help them to receive the tools and the knowledge necessary to be successful at what they're being asked to do.

At times there's information and knowledge and understanding that we want them to come in with immediately.

And then there's other times when we will take it upon ourselves to get them those tools and to bring them through that growth journey.

So when you look at it from their point of view, their perspective, try to get into that mindset just by asking a simple question.

What is it actually like to be led by me today?

Don't to beat yourself up.

So what is it like to be led by me today?

And prior to that, we were asking, what should people experience when they encounter your leadership?

The difference between the two, it's a growth process.

It's a continuously emerging and reoccurring wash, rinse and repeat.

We drive a car, it gets dirty, we wash it and it's clean, we know it's going to get dirty again and need washing.

You never finish washing the car in regular service.

It's something that we expect in leadership.

We should expect that this is a regular part of our leadership maintenance, that we reinvest these elements into ourselves so we can continue to run the race.

Because leadership development does not stop with you.

One of the things that leadership that when we develop, when we develop leaders, if we're developing ourselves or we recognize the talent in someone and help them to develop, we can do this and approach it in a couple of different ways.

We can mentor emerging leaders.

We see that talent, we help them understand what leadership is about if they decide to make that choice.

We can coach someone through a problem.

We can let a person lead a part of a meeting or part of a project.

We can explain the thinking behind the decision making process and we can share what we've learned from mistakes, invite someone into that developmental experience, model how to have those difficult conversations and then debrief afterwards.

And you do not have to present your yourself as the person that has everything figured out.

You can just say, here's something that I'm working on, or here's what I've tried and this is what happened and what this is what I've learned, or hey, in this situation, what did you see?

Because those kinds of conversations help leaders develop, and it become reciprocal.

You teach, you learn.

They grow, you grow.

Eventually, leadership development moves from the individual capability towards a collective capacity.

And that's how the culture can begin to shift.

Because culture is built through repeated choices.

And organizations they may personify, they just might say that we value leadership, that we value development, and we value people.

It's kind of hard not to say those things because it's like, what?

You don't value leadership?

You don't want your people to develop?

You don't value them.

So when they're said, do they really need to be said?

If they're said, they said, say it quickly and just move on to what it is that you really have in mind for making those things become reality.

Because the value then emerges through meaningful behavior.

If leaders say that development matters but never takes the time for coaching, then what do people learn?

And if the leadership says that candor matters, but they punish disagreement, again, what have they learned?

And if the leader says that trust matter but routinely break commitments, again, what have the people learned?

People watch patterns.

Culture forms through repeated signals.

And what the leaders model, teach, coach, and reward and tolerate or pay attention to is a part of that process.

So every leadership choice can become a small cultural signal.

Repeated long enough, those signals matter.

They come together collectively, and they say something.

So why does cultural development matter?

Why should leaders keep doing all of this?

Because leadership affects people, and people are not static.

And nor are our organizations.

What worked last year may not work next year.

A team that grew beyond what they once needed from you has now changed.

And employees may need a different approach.

Technology.

Oh, my God.

Technology.

Technology is continuously emerging and always has been emerging fast.

Moore's law said that it just doubles every 18 months.

And as we start reaching the physical limitations that is getting difficult to meet, we are still making amazing progress through other emerging engineering research and technological manifestations.

Strategies may change as a result.

The organization may experience disruptions never thought of you yourself may change as you continue to grow, learn again, wash, rinse, and repeat.

That cultural development increases the chances that your leadership can adapt with the environment instead of becoming trapped by yesterday's success.

We were able to do this well, yeah, that mattered last year.

What about now?

What about tomorrow?

This also can give leaders permission to remain learners.

That starts to become an emerging characteristic of the culture that we are in a state of continuous learning.

We try, we see that there were things that, that we learned, did not work as expected or as desired, and use it as an opportunity to learn and to grow and to try again.

And through this process, you don't have to know everything.

This is where just the willingness to learn is valuable because we recognize those opportunities as they emerge.

So our failures are not failures.

They're learning opportunities that help us to succeed.

And our success would not have been as beneficial, as sweet, as applicable, as embraceable without those failures.

So many things that have shaped humanity has come from mistakes or has come from failures.

So what is in it for you?

And it's not a super selfish question to ask.

And even those who we want to engage and do things that can help our organizations, our clients, whoever we serve, to wonderful levels of appreciative value.

And people will ask, well, what's in it for me if I do this?

They may not come out and say it quite so bluntly, but essentially that's what they're asking.

The most common thing is a paycheck.

How much I'm going to get paid to do this job and what you're asking me to do, is it worth it?

So for the leader, what is in it?

That's a perfect salient question to ask.

Will there be growth?

Will there be greater levels of self awareness?

Will there be a broader leadership toolkit to take advantage of and utilize?

Will more confident responding to unfamiliar situations emerge?

Will I have a better chance of recognizing when something is not working quite right?

Will my range of ability to adjust to situations increase?

Will I have a stronger capacity to develop other people?

And perhaps something that's even more important is alignment.

Over time, your behavior can become increasingly aligned with the leader that you choose to become.

Not perfectly, but increasingly.

And that is progress.

So a simple leadership practice that you can begin in the next moment in time.

You can begin again this week, you can begin next week.

The important thing is to be again, choose one leadership behavior.

Just one.

Maybe it's something from this series.

Maybe it's something that you need to strengthen, something that you recognize that you want to achieve, then practice it in a real situation, Ask someone for feedback and reflect on what happened, adjust and then try again.

Do that intentionally for a few weeks.

It doesn't have to be something heavy duty, because as an experiment, a thought experiment, we want to help gain confidence in the application and the development of the framework you're more likely to do that and be able to accept a certain rate of failure or loss as you're getting acclimated to this way of thinking.

And that's okay because it's going to pay dividends later.

Just keep with it.

If you look at what helps, talk with a coach, mentor, peer or a trusted colleague and take a look back.

Use it as an opportunity for reflection.

What changed?

What did you learn?

What do you need?

What additional practice is necessary?

What additional elements can we contribute to help you continue through your leadership development journey?

And so the final ask that I have of the two lead series is to think about the leader that you want to become.

So going back to what was shared earlier, just again ask yourself, what will I choose to practice differently because of the leader that I want to become?

And then after that ask, what will people that I lead experience different when I do?

And that is going to going to emerge.

That is going to be a continual opportunity to reflect and to change and to grow.

Practice it.

Ask for feedback.

Reflect honestly.

Adjust what needs to be adjusted and then take another lap.

And then when you learn something useful, help somebody else learn it too.

Not only practice it, but pass it.

Pass, pass it on.

Now, as we are looking forward, this final episode may close out the 2Lead podcast this particular series, but the work may continue in another form room.

To lead, Serve to lead.

Care to lead.

Grow smart to lead.

Trust to lead.

And now the choice.

Choose to lead.

There may be eventually an opportunity to bring these items together in a deeper, deeper practical resource.

And it's just not a simple collection of models, but they're guides, exercises, reflections, conversation tools, some case studies.

They're just ways for a leader to turn ideas into practice.

That's been the point of this from the beginning.

Not simply knowing more about leadership, but leading better.

So in closing, leadership is a choice.

Effective leadership is a practice.

Growth is a journey.

We all make mistakes.

You will make mistakes.

You will learn from them.

You will discover your strengths, further develop them, and you receive the feedback that you may not have expected.

Ask for it.

Consider it.

You will face situations where your old approach eventually no longer works.

It's comfortable, it's an easy place to stay.

But we all need to adjust.

Not only do we need to grow ourselves, but we need to help others grow.

And then there's the opportunity that they will learn and we will learn from them too.

As I mentioned that there is no leadership line for leadership development, no finish line.

There's only another opportunity to choose well.

Practice intentionally.

Reflect honestly and adjust wisely and take the next level lap.

So choose to lead.

Lead to victory.

And remember that good leadership leads to victory.

And whenever you take that next lap, you get that much closer to the finish line.

Thank you so much for spending this time listening to the conclusion of this series and I'll see you in the winner circle.

Have a good day.

Take care.

Earle Airey

00:39:45.920 - 00:40:21.210

Thank you for joining me today on the Victory Leadership Podcast.

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As always, good leadership leads to victory.

I'll see you in the winner's circle.