



MY 6 TENETS OF LEADERSHIP

by Gerry Monasterial

As leaders, we run hard. We have places to go & people to take with us, sometimes whether they like it or not. On occasion, we run hard without giving purposeful thought to the “why” behind our actions. We can go days or even seasons having conversations, creating strategies, and driving towards objectives before we realize we’ve taken a detour from our true goals, our end goals. We try so hard to set the agenda and direction for others that we can sometimes lose our own. Long-lasting leadership requires fundamental tenets that hold fast to a true direction or goal. However, that “true” goal can sometimes get lost in surface distractions that we or others inflict on us.

People and circumstances can definitely cause us to veer off track but our values and fundamentals should steer us back to the end goal. In other words, there is a difference between the goal of winning one game and the goal of winning the season. There is a difference between selling a product and gaining a customer. There is a difference between an employee’s completion of a task and the fullness of his/her understanding in order to be self-reliant over the long term. The challenge is defining and clarifying our “true” end goals from appealing distractions.

There are hundreds of books that give the secret sauce to great leadership and getting results, and although I am a huge proponent of reading as many of these books as possible (my favorites are listed at the end of this article), YOU have to decide YOUR secret sauce. YOU have to decide how you will run, how you will drive, how you will lead, and you must decide purposefully and thoughtfully. The key is deciding the WHY and the HOW before you begin the WHAT. Otherwise, people and circumstances will definitely decide for you. Writing your WHYS and HOWs in pen allows you to write your WHATs in pencil without losing WHO you want to be as a leader.

THINK PURPOSEFULLY & LEAD ACCORDINGLY

Thinking purposefully and leading accordingly are paramount to any leader's long-term impact and their ability to hit "true" end goals. As an example, below are my six HOWs that are based on my WHYs. Although I regularly fail with every single tenet and steer off path due to distractions, stress, and even my own emotional reactions, these fundamentals are what I strive to come back to. As you read through my tenets, craft your own. Decide the values you want to lead by. Decide WHY you lead and HOW you will embody your WHY. Only then can you effectively create and implement your list of WHATs.

DECIDE WHY YOU LEAD & HOW YOU WILL EMBODY YOUR WHY

1. Lead & Learn

(because I have to invest in myself if I want to invest into others)

- Be a Leader that Learns and a Learner that Leads

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other" – John F. Kennedy

"The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing" –Henry Ford

In his book, Teaching to Change Lives, Dr. Howard Hendricks states "I would rather have my students drink from a running stream than a stagnant pool." What a great analogy. It definitely brings to mind the importance of continuing to grow while asking those around us to grow. Leaders should bring life and refreshing perspective to their people. The deeper question then becomes, "are we learning as much and as fast as we can?" This is where a 360 degree learning mentality is essential for growing leadership. If "experience" is the sole resource for a leader to learn, they are limited in their input. In order to maximize learning so that we are a "running stream", we must learn from mentors, books, podcasts, articles, team members, direct reports, cross-functional colleagues, competitors, etc. Leading and learning should be a continual flow of input and output with growth as the end result.

Leadership challenge: How are you learning & growing that ensures you are a running stream to those you lead? Is your amount of continual learning in proportion to your responsibility of leading?

2. Spaghetti & Waffles

(because we have plenty of negativity and can always use more positivity)

- Be a conduit for the positive while compartmentalizing the negative

"There's a direct correlation between positive energy and positive results" –Joe Rogan

"Stay away from negative people, they have a problem for every solution" –Albert Einstein

The theory of spaghetti & waffles points out the difference in processing and dealing with information. The spaghetti tendency connects and intertwines (like spaghetti noodles) while the waffle compartmentalizes and separates (like waffle squares). This theory provides some helpful insight in addressing an important human conundrum which can be summed up in one question. Is happiness the result of a positive circumstance or the cause of it? Although perception would point to the former as the answer, this question is addressed by many leaders, psychologists, and authors with overwhelming support of the latter. Shawn Achor presents a 12 minute YouTube video called "The happy secret to better work" and Liz Wiseman speaks to the importance of happiness in her amazing book, "Grit". Both are worth the watch and the read. If happiness and positivity are crucial to creating positive circumstances, rather than just being the result, it must be the task of the leader to foster this environment. Little things like praising in public and criticizing in private can create a culture of happiness. It is one of many examples of how we become a conduit (like intertwining noodles) for all things positive while responsibly and thoughtfully addressing anything negative in its appropriate place (like a waffle square).

Leadership challenge: What changes can you make to leverage happiness as a cause of your circumstances instead of simply waiting for happiness to be the result by using the spaghetti versus waffles approach?

IS HAPPINESS THE **RESULT** OF POSITIVE
CIRCUMSTANCE OR THE **CAUSE** OF IT?

3. Validate & Challenge

(because everyone needs a champion that will celebrate, yet challenge them)

- Find something worth celebrating from everyone while calling out their untapped potential

"To need to be seen, heard, & understood, is simply to be human" –L.R. Knost

"Our chief want in life is somebody who will make us do what we can" –Ralph Waldo Emerson

Most people are their own worst critics and focus on their shortcomings rather than their value. A leader can and should find the value in others and validate it. Leadership is a “human” skill that requires the ability to lift up others and celebrate their value. Everyone is a genius in something. That something should be called out, validated, and celebrated.

On the flip side of the same coin, a leader should challenge. After all, a leader is simply heading somewhere that others have not been. There is untapped potential and unmet achievements in everyone and without the challenge from leaders, many of us might under achieve what we are capable of.

Leadership challenge: How are you finding and celebrating the value in those you lead? How are you challenging the untapped potential in those you lead?

*EVERYONE NEEDS A CHAMPION THAT
WILL CELEBRATE, YET CHALLENGE THEM*

4. Tenacious & Gracious

(because it is not worth achieving something if we hurt people in the process)

- Live with tenacity but treat others with kindness along the way

“Constant dripping hollows out a stone” –Lucretius

“You can accomplish by kindness what you cannot by force” –Publilius Syrus

Be hard on issues but easy on people. If you’re like me, I sometimes reverse that. I can be more gracious with circumstances and take my frustrations out on people. In addition, I often judge myself by my intentions while judging others by their actions. There should be room to consider both, intentions and actions, in all of our relationships. This is where empathy can play a crucial role for leaders. Empathy is one of the least emphasized, yet most important role leaders can implement in order to make long-lasting impact on others. The more willing we are to consider someone’s point of view and best intentions to partner with them to attack the issue, the more likely we are to achieve the common result we are both looking for.

Leadership challenge: How could being more gracious to the people around you give you more capacity and assistance in being tenacious with the issues you’re dealing with?

*EVERYONE NEEDS A CHAMPION THAT
WILL CELEBRATE, YET CHALLENGE THEM*

5. Responsible Transparency

(because I am always a work in progress and only a few have earned my unconditional trust and vulnerability)

- Being Authentic without being compromised

"It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are" –E.E. Cummings

"It's better to trust a few deeply and be right than to trust everyone & be wrong" –

I've asked many managers, "If you could go back and tell yourself something when you first began leading or managing people, what would you say?" The two most common answers I receive have to do with "being true to myself" and "not oversharing myself". On the surface, these seem almost contradictory. How can you be your authentic self without being willing to share your whole self? I believe the answer lies in the subtle difference between authenticity and transparency. Authenticity is being true to yourself, your values, and your preferences while transparency is exposing everything to everyone. For example, being vulnerable and telling your colleague that you are "going through a tough season and dealing with decisions" is authenticity. It's being real. Transparency would be telling them that your spouse has gambled away your life savings and you're filing for divorce. Authenticity in the workplace is leaning into vulnerability to grow and develop into your better self with colleagues that are also striving for that same growth. Transparency is exposing your lesser self to others without an environment of empathy and a goal of growth. You can obviously be authentic without necessarily being transparent. Authenticity is also living out your values and reactively answering honest questions about your values, while transparency is proactively speaking about your values with no regard to your audience. The subtle line between authenticity and transparency can be drawn with emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-awareness.

Leadership challenge: What steps can you take to find the balance between being true to yourself without oversharing yourself? How can you find the sweet spot of being responsibly transparent by being authentic without being compromised? Additionally, as a leader, how can you foster an environment of vulnerability and trust to compel responsible transparency in your people?

*THE SUBTLE LINE BETWEEN AUTHENTICITY
AND TRANSPARENCY CAN BE DRAWN
WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE,
EMPATHY, AND SELF-AWARENESS.*

6. Courage Before Confidence

(because I want to grow fearlessly, regardless of my self-belief)

- Confidence should be the result while Courage should be the cause.

"I have an unstable relationship with self-confidence but a growing bond with courage" –

"Courage is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm" –Eleanor Roosevelt

The term "Imposter Syndrome" has been written about in many articles the last few years. This syndrome is apparently widespread among professionals. On a scale of self-belief, Imposter Syndrome is on one end and Narcissism is on the other. One is based in insecurity while the other is based in false confidence of one's own importance and abilities. I believe we innocently propel the problem of Imposter Syndrome by misusing, or at the very least, over-emphasizing the idea of confidence. We tell people to "have confidence" when they're stepping into something new. What we mean to say is, "have courage". Confidence is something earned from a past experience or achievement. If someone already has confidence in something they have never done or achieved, that would be misplaced or false confidence. It is born out of thin air, which could lead to a displaced sense of self-belief (narcissism). Courage, however, is definitely something we should learn to invoke from thin air. It should be ever-present in our DNA and available to call on, out of habit. In anything new or bigger than we have ever done, confidence should be the result of the courage we summoned. Obviously, transferrable skills are an important part of development and these skills garner some level of confidence. Because of this, the mix between courage and confidence might be 50/50 rather than 100/0. The key is understanding what is truly needed and available for an upcoming challenge. Is it confidence already earned that needs to be awakened or is it courage that must be chosen and summoned?

Leadership challenge: What are some areas that you have truly earned your confidence? What are some areas that you need to summon courage? Are there opportunities to call on the courage of others regardless of their level of confidence?

**CONFIDENCE SHOULD BE THE RESULT
WHILE COURAGE SHOULD BE THE CAUSE**

Must Read Books:

Multipliers by Greg McKeown and Liz Wiseman

Start with Why by Simon Sinek

Leaders Eat Last by Simon Sinek

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership by John C. Maxwell

Daring Greatly by Brene' Brown

Extreme Ownership by Jocko Willink

The Dichotomy of Leadership by Jock Willink

Good to Great by Jim Collins

True North by Bill George