

*Here's how to...*

# Be an Effective Leader for Your Team

There is no universally accepted "formula" for leadership. Effective leadership, however, is generally considered to be a major contributor to the success of a business. As you develop your unique leadership style consider the leadership tenets below.

<b>Leader priorities</b>	One of your priorities as leader is to eliminate confusion for your team. Confusion leads to inconsistencies in operations, and <i>consistency</i> is a big part of how we "keep our promise" to our customers in terms of what they can expect from store to store. Train and develop your team, review procedures, and have meetings and discussions. By minimizing confusion on basic store operations, your team can competently work on "auto-pilot" in the routine "stuff," freeing up their thoughts and attention to engage their customers and deliver the right kind of service each customer deserves.
<b>Set &amp; communicate expectations</b>	When you depend on your team's perceptions to match your expectations—and you don't tell them your expectations—you are setting your team up for failure. Talk with your team and ensure that everyone knows the store's purpose and priorities and what's expected of all involved. Leave no doubt. Use clear, specific terms. Check for understanding. And remember that it goes both ways; don't forget to ask your team their expectations of you.
<b>Hire good people</b>	Coach everyone to become better, and cut your losses with those who become "a project." You don't have time for "projects." Keeping "projects" on the team undermines good behaviors across the board because it signals to the rest of the team that the negative behaviors of their under-achieving teammates must be acceptable to you because you continue to keep them around.
<b>When you see it, say it!</b>  <i>If you lose your ability to be an effective leader, people will tend to quit you and leave (because people tend to quit people before people quit jobs), or possibly worse, they'll quit you and stay, and then that becomes an entirely different performance issue.</i>	<p>Recognize great performance! Compliments, smiles, small tangible rewards... rewarding positive behavior is a sure way to reinforce it and help it "stick."</p> <p>If necessary, give constructive "course corrections." Make the time to deal with performance discrepancies as soon as you become aware of them. The earlier you address issues, the easier and less emotional they will be to handle. If you see early signs that an employee may be heading for trouble, help the person recognize performance pitfalls and make sure they are clear on the consequences. Don't ignore performance issues. Problems will have an effect on your entire team. Your team is watching you and depending on you to do the right thing. Ignoring issues puts your own integrity at risk, and if you lose your integrity in the eyes of your team, you won't be able to develop or maintain trust.</p>
<b>Focus on the right things</b>	Don't try to solve time problems by <i>working harder</i> . Doing the <i>wrong</i> thing harder doesn't help. Focus on doing the right thing most efficiently. Examine the processes in your store. Look for opportunities to combine tasks or sequence them in such way that frees up small increments of time.
<b>Know when to be flexible</b>	Know when to be open to new ideas and different approaches, when to accommodate reasonable requests from your team, etc. Know, too, when to be rigid. Your team must know that on certain specified issues, you will take a rigid stance and that when faced with those issues, you will act quickly, competently and in accordance with your organization's stated guidelines.
<b>Characteristics of great leaders</b>  <i>Your behavior is often the real performance standard your team will follow.</i>	<p>Leaders must have zeal, inspiration, a spark! It's tough to be a leader if you can't energize yourself and then energize your team. They need to be able to tap your emotional energy—and you need to be able to tap into theirs. Possessing self-control and discipline helps you stay on track in the face of stress, pressure and fear. Great leaders have a certain mental toughness that allows them to "create success." This toughness, however, is not rigidity in the face of adversity, but stability and poise in the face of challenge.</p>
<b>Leaders accept responsibility</b>	When adversity strikes and a setback results, don't throw your hands up in the air, relinquish control and "blame" the situation for the result. As the leader, recognize that the situation just forces you to now make different decisions. Leaders retain control and move their teams forward.
<b>For more information</b>	To support your leadership success in your store, seek out management and leadership books or subscribe to online leadership articles. Commit to reading a little bit every day. Find a mentor or work to model your leadership style after those whom you admire.

## Think about it...

After ensuring that your employees clearly understand consequences of a particular course of action, whatever happens becomes *their decision*. If they choose to continue on that path, then *they* are deciding to accept the consequence. In holding them to the consequence—whether minor or severe—you then are merely implementing *their decision*.

## Helping Your Team Cope with Change

1. Explain why the change is required or necessary.
2. Describe "what's in it for us."
3. Provide training and resources necessary.
4. Solicit and address any employee questions and concerns.
5. Be patient—expect mistakes as new habits are formed.
6. Demonstrate support and commitment to the change yourself.