

Leadership



A guide to developing enlightened leadership -
26 lessons from A to Z

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enlightening people

Leadership is about working with people to do new things in a world which is increasingly complex and fast changing. We need organisations that are flexible and sustainable, and organisations are made up of individuals. Leadership is not necessarily linked to authority. It is about mobilising people to tackle the toughest problems and to do their best work. Leadership is embedded in every one of us, but the key is to unlock our personal passion which will give us the courage to do things that appear difficult, uncertain or even unpopular.

This short guide is intended to do just that - to review what you do and why you do it and to help you become an enlightened leader. We hope that you will take a few minutes each day to read and then think about an aspect of leadership. Devoting time to noticing how you are and what you do and say will enable you to improve as a leader. Use this booklet to make notes on the ideas suggested. Try it every day for the next 26 days and see the difference it can make!



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Margi Gordon
Principal Consultant for Leadership and Management



Authenticity as a leader means aligning *who you are* with *what you do*. It means making sure that your actions live out your words: if you say something is important, this is reflected in how you spend your time. When we see authentic leaders, we see congruence – people who are consistent in their beliefs and who behave in a way that demonstrates those beliefs in action. For example: if you say people are important, do you spend enough time with people, really listening to them? Authentic leaders have a reputation for keeping their promises - they are 100% trustworthy because they are driven by their values.

What values and beliefs are most important to you as a person?

How do you demonstrate them in what you do as a leader?

“Moral Courage is a higher and rarer virtue than physical courage”

William, J. Slim



Boundary breaking is often the mark of a leader. Boundaries define what people are responsible for and enable them to decide what to do and what not to do. Many organisations decide to 'empower' people but then constrain them with rules and procedures to follow. Boundaries exist in job titles, allocation of resources, working practices, methods of communication, and hierarchical reporting lines. Leadership is about pushing at boundaries, using initiative and doing new things. It is easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission. Organisations need structures that create freedom - try describing what you will not do, instead of defining what you will do. Focus on what needs to be achieved and the procedures or protocols that get in the way.

What are the boundaries that constrain you at work?

Where could you add value as a leader if you pushed at a boundary?

Where could you remove a boundary for people that would increase their freedom to act as leaders?

Coaching is the key to developing new leaders. Some people feel threatened by sharing their knowledge, but these days, most information is accessible through the Internet. People, not knowledge, make the difference. Enlightened leaders understand that they get good results by working with the best people. Coaching is one way of developing the best team.

The performance of even the greatest experts can be enhanced, by 'non-directive' coaching. This means helping people to review their performance and understand how to build on their strengths, by asking them open questions. For example:

- What have you done recently that was successful?
- What made it go successfully?
- How did you feel about it?
- How can you build on this success?

Decide who you are going to coach to achieve increased performance, and dedicate 30 minutes to having a coaching conversation with that person today.

Distributed leadership means empowering people to take leadership at every level in an organisation. It means giving the work back to people, instead of trying to be the leader who knows everything and solves all the problems. Use the skills and energy of the people around you. Ask them how improvements can be made. Encourage them to take responsibility for things that are annoying them. If you develop people, you can delegate to them. Delegation is not about dumping tasks you do not want to do. It's about delegating responsibility but retaining the accountability for achieving the desired results. It's about creating capable people, and it can free you up to be more creative.

What could you delegate today?

Who would you empower to do it?

What result are you looking for?

What coaching or support might be needed to enable them to achieve a good result?

Remember it is important to discuss **what and **why**, but let them decide **how**.**

“A leader is best when people barely know that he exists, less good when they obey and acclaim him, worse when they fear or despise him. Fail to honour people and they fail to honour you. But of a good leader, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say ‘we did this ourselves’.”

Lao-Tzu



Emotional intelligence (EI) is the understanding of your emotions and how to manage them, and it is recognising emotions in other people and then managing your relationship with them. The ability to recognise and manage emotions is considered as four times more important than IQ in achieving success.

First of all you need to become aware of your emotions and how they affect you.

Think about your emotions - they usually fall into one of the following categories; happiness, sadness, anger, disgust or fear.

Which of your emotions is most likely to take control of you, so that you feel you have no choice in your response to it?

How could you change your response when you feel that emotion?

What other ways of responding can you think of?

Start noticing when you respond differently to this emotion e.g. if you stop shouting when you are angry, or stop procrastinating when you are anxious. This is what is meant by 'using your emotional intelligence'. Once you have mastered your emotions, pay attention to other people's emotions and acknowledge them: 'You look worried, what's concerning you?' 'You seem happy today, what's going on?' You will get new insight into other people's situations which will help you to develop your relationship with them.

Feedback is one of the great tools of leadership. It is the ability to give people real feedback about what they have done well and what needs improving. Many people avoid giving negative feedback but it's equally difficult to give positive feedback without being patronising. Effective feedback is given with positive intent, either to build confidence, recognise a contribution or to identify what might be getting in the way of progress. Another facet of leadership is the ability to receive feedback with an open mind and not to become defensive. The more senior managers become, the more they are protected from feedback. Try to ensure you are always asking for feedback and that you are open minded when you get it - it is not always easy to accept other peoples' views of us.

Are you open to feedback? Do you respond with questions that help you to clarify the feedback?

Identify someone that you could ask for feedback today - ask them what they think you should do more of, what you could start doing and what you should stop doing. Stay open-minded and get curious about what they are telling you. You can always choose whether to act on their feedback.



Global leadership requires new ways of thinking. The world is increasingly unstable, technology has created increased connectedness, organisational structures are diffuse, teams are virtual, and change continues at a greater rate than ever before. Today's organisations need to be able to deal with cross-cultural working, political crises, natural disasters and still behave as responsible corporate citizens. Roffey Park research (Building Global Leadership, 2004) has identified some key capabilities that distinguish effective global leaders:

- Strategic thinking – the 'helicopter' view that bridges boundaries between local allegiances
- Intercultural competence – the creation of inclusive work environments
- Crisis management – the anticipation of risks and a focus on response to change
- Political astuteness – the ability to network with a wide range of stakeholders
- Ethical leadership – an understanding and demonstration of social responsibility and governance
- Improvisation – at ease in dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity
- Global mindset – a broad outlook that is open to the unfamiliar

Where are your strengths? What capabilities do you need to develop?

Hero or helper? Are you determined to lead from the front or are you more likely to be a supporter of people? Do you see yourself as the knowledgeable expert, who can solve any problem that comes up? Are you the person who makes all the important decisions and who is at the centre of all the action - in control of the situation - the hero? Or do you believe that your role as a leader is to support and encourage people so that they can solve their own problems. Are you a developer of people who empowers them to make decisions at the front line - the helper?

Most of us assume that we need to be heroic leaders, but in today's reality, where we are dealing with new and complex scenarios, the skills of the helper are often more useful (see Wicked problems). Both styles are needed. You need to be able to walk the line, recognising when direction and decision making are needed and, when new situations arise, moving to collaboration and discussion - so you can tap into the expertise in the team.

On the continuum, from which position do you lead your team? Mark it X

Hero ←————→ Helper

What would you need to do to develop your ability to flex your style from hero to helper, and vice versa?



Influence is the hallmark of an effective leader. People work in matrix structures with multiple reporting lines: they may report to a line manager, a project team leader and a head of function. People are constantly telling us that they need to get things done, but they are not in a position of authority where they can tell people to get on with it. They need to get buy-in, and influencing skills are crucial.

Influencing can range from a request 'I need you to do this', to sharing an attractive vision of what you want to achieve, to asking questions and identifying common ground. Once you understand the other person's position, you are more likely to find ways to achieve their buy-in to your proposal. You can build trust by keeping the other person's interests in mind at all times.

How do you influence others - by making clear statements about what you want or by asking questions and drawing out other people's needs?

Is your attention focused primarily on you, or on the other person?

Do you identify common ground before trying to influence the other person?

Try using a different approach to influencing today, and notice the impact.

Job performance can be related to the way people are managed and led. Leadership impacts on the climate at work, and climate can determine how well people perform. Your leadership can have a direct impact on people's motivation and self-esteem, and subsequently their performance. Most people are motivated - your role as a leader is not to de-motivate them. If people are engaged in their work and have an opportunity to do what they do best, they will be high performers. You create the environment where people excel.

Have a conversation today with one or two of your team members - ask them what they do best. Discuss with them how they can do more of their best work. Then create the opportunity for them to do it.

Know yourself. The most inspirational leaders are people who know themselves. Their leadership is developed from the inside out. They are able to speak confidently about their strengths and weaknesses without any embarrassment or defensiveness. They get their confidence from understanding and liking themselves. They are open to feedback, and they are able to apologise and admit mistakes. Their self-esteem is based on recognising that no-one is perfect, but that life is a journey with lessons to be learnt along the way. Learning about yourself is often the hardest lesson.

Write down your top three strengths. How can you use these to best effect? Write down three weaknesses that need to be developed. What can you do to improve these areas?

Strengths	Weaknesses
1	1
2	2
3	3



Level 5 leaders. In his comprehensive study of organisations, 'Good to Great' (2001), Jim Collins found that the leaders who had turned around organisations in a sustained way all had a strong sense of purpose, and a high level of humility. He called them Level 5 leaders. They identified what needed to be done to ensure the success of the organisation, and they also realised that they could not achieve those results without the help and support of others. They channelled their ambition into the company and demonstrated unwavering resolve to do what needed to be done.

Collins describes it as the Mirror and the Window - when things go badly Level 5 leaders look in the mirror and ask 'what could I have done differently?' When things go well, they look out of the window to identify who or what has contributed to that success.

Take time to review a recent success and a failure.

Using the idea of the Mirror and the Window, think about:

- **Who or what contributed to the success? And how? How could you recognise their contribution?**
- **What can you learn from the failure? What could you have done differently?**



Manifesto. Ask yourself; 'why should anyone follow me?' Develop a personal leadership manifesto, to explain why you are worth following. What can you offer others? How does your vision or purpose connect with them? Why should they follow you?

Identify when, where and why it would be useful or important to communicate this to people. Then evaluate how well you demonstrate your manifesto in practice. Ask yourself if you would follow someone who behaves as you do. Do you inspire trust? Is everything you do congruent with what you say is important?

Develop your leadership manifesto by answering the following questions:

What do I stand for as a leader?

What is my purpose and passion?

What will people get from me as a leader?

What is my vision for my team and my area of responsibility?

Then identify an opportunity where you can share this with your team.

"Managers are often so busy cutting through the undergrowth that they don't even realise they are in the wrong jungle. A leader is a person who climbs the tallest tree, surveys the entire situation and yells; 'wrong jungle!'"

(Covey, 1985, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*)

Needs. Enlightened leaders recognise that each individual who works with them has a choice - to engage in a shared enterprise or not. There are some universal motivational drivers (Kets de Vries, 2003), which are shared by people everywhere. We are motivated by basic physiological needs, and other needs such as the need to engage with other people and belong to something (affiliation), we need to explore and learn, we seek mastery, and we need to have choice (self assertion).

These needs can be met by creating an environment where there is alignment between people's personal needs and organisational objectives. People have a sense of self determination when they have a voice in what they do and where they go, and when they believe that their actions make a difference. They need a feeling of community, where trust and respect flourish. They need an opportunity for enjoyment, a place of work where imagination, innovation and creativity are encouraged. People also need a sense of meaning - they want to feel they can make a difference.

Take a look at some of the organisations that are designed to meet these needs (Semco, W.L. Gore, Harley Davidson) where people are given the opportunity to work in flat structures, determine their own pay, and initiate new projects. These organisations encourage distributed leadership.

What does this mean for you as a leader? How can you create an organisation that meets the needs of people?

Organisational culture is one of the transformational aspects of organisational change. Culture can be described as 'the way we do things around here', and in any major change, culture can be hard to shift. On arrival at IBM, Lou Gerstner recognised that to turn the company around, he had to tackle the culture of individualism that existed. As a leader, his goal was to move towards a team culture that was better integrated internally so that customers received an integrated service externally. His conclusion? "The thing I have learned at IBM is that culture is everything". (Harvard Business Working Knowledge, 2002).

So what is culture? It is a mix of the rational and irrational; from the organisational systems and structures, to the stories, symbols and rituals that exist. You can change the rational structures and systems, but also pay attention to the myths that abound in the folklore of organisations. They will persist after the new systems have been introduced, unless you actively create new rituals and stories. Storytelling is a powerful way to shift culture.

What are the stories and myths that are told in your organisation?

How would you like those to change?

If they changed, how would that affect the organisational culture?

What is your role in changing those stories?



Power and politics. People often assume that power in organisations is linked to position in the hierarchy, but there are other sources of power. Think for a moment about what gives people power in organisations. They might have access to information, or be an expert in their subject area, so their views are respected. They may have the power of veto, or control essential resources, such as budgets or they may just be people that others find easy to get on with.

Politics are an inevitable part of organisational life and are often seen as a cause of stress (Roffey Park Management Agenda, 2007). However, people who are politically aware and who act with integrity are often successful in achieving change. They are prepared to listen to others' viewpoints, share information, and work towards a win:win solution. They approach office politics with the view that this is about overcoming internal barriers to achieve a business objective (and it is not about personal reward).

As leadership is about getting things done through others, it is useful to pay attention to your relationships with key people. Draw your network, showing important relationships with large circles and strong relationships with thick lines linking the circles. Review your relationship map and decide which connections need attention. Think about the best ways to develop those relationships.

Questions are at the heart of leadership. Questions can be used to facilitate discussions. Questions can be asked about how people are feeling about change, what contributed to a recent success, what customers want, how to support diversity, how the world is changing, what might be needed in the future and so on. Questions are also a great way of challenging people to take a fresh look at an issue or problem, and helping them to think about the outcomes they want: What do you want to be different? How will you know?

The difficult leadership questions are the ones that involve ethical dilemmas: Should I accept this contract that will be environmentally harmful because it will keep people in work? Should I tell people about the possible acquisition or will it cause unnecessary worry? Organisations are expected to be socially responsible, and leaders have to tackle challenging questions. Ethical leaders tell the truth and explain why they cannot always share all the information they hold, or why they have made a difficult decision.

Next time you are dealing with an ethical dilemma, think about:

- Transparency - am I happy to make my decision public - especially to the people affected by it?
- Effect - have I fully considered any harmful effects of my decision and how to prevent them?
- Fairness - would my decision be considered fair by everyone affected by it?



Resilience is important as you rise up through organisational structures and become more visible. Criticism comes with visibility. The ability to pick yourself up after disappointments, to manage criticism, and to motivate yourself is key to managing your emotions. If you believe that, at the end of the day, you are responsible for where you are in life, then you have an 'internal locus of control'. An internal locus of control means that you believe you have some say over your destiny. If you believe that your outcomes are determined by factors extrinsic to yourself such as luck, or other people's actions, your locus of control is external, and you are more likely to resort to blaming others for failures or mistakes.

People with an internal locus of control are likely to be more effective because they are more self-reliant. They will pick people with superior or equal ability to complete a task. They will recover from knocks, because they know that whilst they cannot change other people, or the external circumstances, they can always change their own response to a situation.

Think about how you respond to disappointment or criticism – does it get you down? How do you pick yourself up and carry on? What might you want to do differently going forward?

“Success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm”

Winston Churchill

Strategic thinking is long term and focused on **what** needs to be done, not **how** it will be done. It is about creating a sustainable future by adding value to the organisation from the perspective of shareholders, customers and employees; by doing more business, creating new products or services or getting staff more engaged in their work. Strategic thinking means having an overview of the external factors that affect the business, understanding the competitive environment and envisaging what customers might be looking for in the future. It is a different mindset from operational or tactical thinking. It is about having a 'helicopter' view, standing back from the day to day business, and thinking about the long term direction. Leaders then need to translate this vision into action - and this usually means doing things differently or doing new and innovative things. In order to bring about change, leaders provide a rationale for change, a clear vision to strive for and an understanding of the first steps to take.

Are you clear about your long term vision?

Have you communicated that vision clearly to the people involved?

(You will probably find that you have under-communicated your vision by a factor of 10)

How are short term goals aligned to the long term strategy?

Is there a good reason for people to change the way things are now?

Do people know how to start making changes?



Time. Your time is your life. Are you spending your time on the right things? Are you finding the time to think strategically? Are you spending time building relationships? Are you finding time to coach and develop your successors? Are you balancing work and home life effectively? Or are you getting drawn into daily fire fighting? Solving day to day problems, managing crises and responding to demands from above often take up most of our time. But the real satisfaction is in moving the organisation to a better position, not just maintaining the status quo and yet most of our time is spent doing just that.

Over a period of about 5 days, notice how you spend your time - keep a diary of the activities you undertake.

- How much time did you spend responding to crises?
- How much time did you spend on distractions, such as impromptu meetings, interruptions, demands from the boss?
- How much time did you spend on tasks such as completing expense reports, e-mails etc?
- How much time did you invest in thinking strategically, involving people, communicating the vision?

If you are not finding enough time to think strategically, book out 2 hours each week to give yourself time to stand back and review what you are doing.

Uncertainty. In a fast-changing world, leaders need the skills to manage their response to uncertainty, especially when it comes to making decisions. It's hard to gather all the information relating to a situation - there will always be more available, but your ability to make a decision is probably related to how comfortable you are with using your intuition and taking risks. If you use your intuition and make a quick decision, further data may become available but by the time you have all the detail, you may have missed an opportunity.

The skill is consulting key people, generating alternative options, getting sufficient information to make a justifiable decision, making a choice and not procrastinating. Leaders are comfortable taking responsibility for decisions. If you are aware that you are uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, start by 'reframing' uncertainty and think of it as a leadership challenge to be addressed.

Develop your ability to cope with uncertainty by noticing your intuitive response when facing a difficult decision. Work through your normal decision-making process and make your choice – then compare it with your intuitive response. Do this several times. If your final decision is frequently the same as your intuitive decision, try using your intuition with more confidence. You will find yourself becoming more comfortable with ambiguity and risk taking - it's good preparation for more senior roles.



Virtual teams. You will probably find yourself managing a virtual team at some point in your career. A virtual team is one separated by distance, time, culture and may comprise people from different functions, who do not know each other. The challenge of managing people from a distance is that they feel isolated, uninvolved, and they often feel passed over for promotions or new assignments. They say that they get too little communication and that their manager is either involved too little or too much, often around the wrong things.

Leadership of virtual teams works well when you invest time in getting together to set up the team and develop a shared goal. You need to demonstrate trust - this is easier if you have a shared understanding about the outcome required. You need to develop the right method of communication: e-mail, phone, video conference or face to face. Think about how you can develop more empathetic relationships. Be aware of unspoken messages; check out your understanding of what is going on. Imagine what it might be like on the ground for your team members. Try telephone coaching using a non-directive approach (see Coaching).

Think about what a virtual team member expects from you and decide what you need to do to meet their needs. Identify someone who works remotely from you and call them today.

Wicked problems are ones that we have never met before, and we do not know how to solve them. Keith Grint (2005) describes problems as three types, Critical, Tame and Wicked, each needing a different approach. Critical problems need immediate decisive action, using a command style. Tame problems, where the situation has occurred before, can be solved using proven management strategies. Wicked problems require a leadership approach, using a collaborative style, because there is uncertainty about how to resolve the issue.

This is where Grint sees leadership as playing a key role. He suggests that leaders need to be prepared to ask questions and facilitate discussions when faced with wicked problems: the solution to a wicked problem will require agreement and support from those involved. Leaders need to use 'soft' power - the risk of using hard power here is that if the leader goes into command mode, the solution chosen may not be either the best rational option or the option that is most acceptable to the majority of those involved.

Think about a difficult issue you are facing.

Is it a Critical, Tame or Wicked problem? Do other people see it same way?

Are you trying to solve it with Command, Management or Leadership skills?

If it needs a collaborative approach, who are you going to involve and what questions are you going to ask them?



X-Y theory. Douglas McGregor proposed his X-Y theory in his book 'The Human Side of Enterprise'. McGregor maintained that there are two fundamental approaches to leading people depending on whether you believe that people dislike work and need to be coerced to perform (Theory X) or you believe that people are self directed and perform best when invited to be collaborative and take responsibility. (Theory Y).

Managers with a Theory X approach generally get poor results. People frequently leave jobs because they do not like the way they are managed and led. Managers who apply Theory Y produce better performance and results, and people grow and develop in their teams – they are more likely to be viewed as leaders rather than managers.

Do you believe in Theory X or Theory Y?

If you think the average person prefers to be directed, to avoid responsibility, and is relatively un-ambitious, you probably believe in Theory X. Try telling yourself that most people have the capacity to use a high degree of imagination, ingenuity and creativity to solve organisational problems. Delegate a task today that you would have done yourself. You may be surprised to find that people outperform your expectations!



You the leader. Think about the legacy you will leave as a leader. What do you want to be remembered for? Providing people with challenging assignments? Encouraging people to achieve high standards? Creating an environment where people can use their skills and abilities? Great results?

Being an honest and trustworthy leader? Coaching people and developing their talents? Inspiring people to achieve a purpose that is meaningful and moral? Supporting new ideas? Being determined? Contributing to a sustainable future?

What do you want to be remembered for?

Zen is a 'way of life': a life of humility, a life of labour, a life of service, a life of prayer and gratitude, and a life of meditation (Suzuki). Leadership in the Zen tradition is about service; as a steward of resources, and as a servant of others. Leadership is also a way of life which requires energy and renewal. You will be a better leader when you take care of yourself physically, mentally, and spiritually. Take time to eat and sleep, to exercise, to learn and to spend time doing the things that are important to you like spending time with family and friends, practising your faith and enjoying the natural world.

Make a personal commitment to get the work-life balance that you desire. Pay attention to all aspects of your life; mind body and spirit and go home early tonight!



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For more information about Roffey Park, please visit our website at www.roffeypark.com

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