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Leadership Skills For Success



LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

Winning attitude and must have's for aspiring Leaders

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Chapter 1. Things You Thought You Knew About Leadership

Much has been written about leadership: rules, pointers, styles, and biographies of inspiring leaders throughout world history. But there are certain leadership ideas that we ourselves fail to recognize and realize in the course of reading books. Here is a short list of things you thought you knew about leadership.

1. Leaders come in different flavors.

There are different types of leaders and you will probably encounter more than one type in your lifetime. Formal leaders are those we elect into positions or offices such as the senators, congressmen, and presidents of the local clubs. Informal leaders or those we look up to by virtue of their wisdom and experience such as in the case of the elders of a tribe, or our grandparents; or by virtue of their expertise and contribution on a given field such as Albert Einstein in the field of Theoretical Physics and Leonardo da Vinci in the field of the Arts. Both formal and informal leaders practice a combination of leadership styles.

- Lewin's three basic leadership styles – authoritative, participative, and delegative
- Likert's four leadership styles – exploitive authoritative, benevolent authoritative, consultative, and participative
- Goleman's six emotional leadership styles - visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting, and commanding.

2. Leadership is a process of becoming.

Although certain people seem to be born with innate leadership qualities, without the right environment and exposure, they may fail to develop their full potential. So like learning how to ride a bicycle, you can also learn how to become a leader and hone your leadership abilities. Knowledge on leadership theories and skills may be formally gained by enrolling in leadership seminars, workshops, and conferences. Daily interactions with people provide the opportunity to observe and practice leadership theories. Together, formal and informal learning will help you gain leadership attitudes, gain leadership insights, and thus furthering the cycle of learning. You do not become a leader in one day and just stop. Life-long learning is important in becoming a good leader for each day brings new experiences that put your knowledge, skills, and attitude to a test.

3. Leadership starts with you.

The best way to develop leadership qualities is to apply it to your own life. As an adage goes “action speaks louder than words.” Leaders are always in the limelight. Keep in mind that your credibility as a leader depends much on your actions: your interaction with your family, friends, and co-workers; your way of managing your personal and organizational responsibilities; and even the way you talk with the newspaper vendor across the street. Repeated actions become habits. Habits in turn form a person’s character. Steven Covey’s book entitled 7 Habits of Highly Effective People provides good insights on how you can achieve personal leadership.

4. Leadership is shared.

Leadership is not the sole responsibility of one person, but rather a shared responsibility among members of an emerging team. A leader belongs to a group. Each member has responsibilities to fulfill. Formal leadership positions are merely added responsibilities aside from their responsibilities as members of the team. Effective leadership requires members to do their share of work. Starting as a mere group of individuals, members and leaders work towards the formation of an effective team. In this light, social interaction plays a major role in leadership. To learn how to work together requires a great deal of trust between and among leaders and members of an emerging team. Trust is built upon actions and not merely on words. When mutual respect exists, trust is fostered and confidence is built.

5. Leadership styles depend on the situation.

How come dictatorship works for Singapore but not in the United States of America? Aside from culture, beliefs, value system, and form of government, the current situation of a nation also affects the leadership styles used by its formal leaders. There is no rule that only one style can be used. Most of the time, leaders employ a combination of leadership styles depending on the situation. In emergency situations such as periods of war and calamity, decision-making is a matter of life and death. Thus, a nation’s leader cannot afford to consult with all departments to arrive at crucial decisions. The case is of course different in times of peace and order---different sectors and other branches of government can freely interact and participate in governance. Another case in point is in leading organizations. When the staffs are highly motivated and competent, a combination of high delegative and moderate participative styles of leadership is most appropriate. But if the staffs have low competence and low commitment, a combination of high coaching, high supporting, and high directing behavior from organizational leaders is required.

Now that you are reminded of these things, keep in mind that there are always ideas that we think we already know; concepts we take for granted, but are actually the most useful insights on leadership.

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Chapter 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING IN YOUR SELF

Sometimes, when all our doubts, fears and insecurities wrap ourselves up, we always come up with the idea of “I wish I was somebody else.” More often than not, we think and believe that someone or rather, most people are better than us.- when in reality, the fact is, most people are more scared than us.

You spot a totally eye-catching girl sitting by herself at a party, casually sipping on a glass of Asti Spumanti. You think to yourself, “she looks so perfectly calm and confident.” But if you could read thru her transparent mind, you would see a bunch of clouds of thoughts and you might just be amazed that she’s thinking “are people talking about why I am seated here alone?... Why don’t guys find me attractive? ...I don’t like my ankles, they look too skinny... I wish I was as intelligent as my best friend.”

We look at a young business entrepreneur and say “Wooh... what else could he ask for?” He stares at himself at the mirror and murmur to himself, “I hate my big eyes... I wonder why my friends won’t talk to me... I hope mom and dad would still work things out.”

Isn’t it funny? We look at other people, envy them for looking so outrageously perfect and wish we could trade places with them, while they look at us and thinks of the same thing. We are insecure of other people who themselves are insecure of us. We suffer from low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence and lose hope in self improvement because we are enveloped in quiet desperation.

Sometimes, you notice that you have an irritating habit like biting off your finger nails, having a foul mouth, and you – of all people, is the last to know.

I have a friend who never gets tired of talking. And in most conversations, she is the only one who seems to be interested in the things she has to say. So all of our other friends tend to avoid the circles whenever she's around, and she doesn't notice how badly she became socially handicapped – gradually affecting the people in her environment.

One key to self improvement is to LISTEN and TALK to a trusted friend. Find someone who you find comfort in opening up with even the most gentle topics you want to discuss. Ask questions like “do you think I am ill-mannered?”, “Do I always sound so argumentative?”, “Do I talk too loud?”, “Does my breath smell?”, “Do I ever bore you when were together?”. In this way, the other person will obviously know that you are interested in the process of self improvement. Lend her your ears for comments and criticisms and don't give her answers like “Don't exaggerate! That's just the way I am!” Open up your mind and heart as well. And in return, you may want to help your friend with constructive criticism that will also help her improve her self.

One of Whitney Houston's songs says “Learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all.” True enough. In order to love others, you must love yourself too. Remember, you cannot give what you do not have.

Before telling other people some ways on how to improve themselves, let them see that you yourself is a representation and a product of self improvement. Self improvement makes us better people, we then inspire other people, and then the rest of the world will follow.

Stop thinking of yourselves as second-rate beings. Forget the repetitive thought of “If only I was richer... if only I was thinner” and so on. Accepting your true self is the first step to self improvement. We need to stop comparing ourselves to others only to find out at the end that we've got 10 more reasons to envy them.

We all have our insecurities. Nobody is perfect. We always wish we had better things, better features, better body parts, etc. But life need not to be perfect for people to be happy about themselves. Self improvement and loving yourself is not a matter of shouting to the whole world that you are perfect and you are the best. It's the virtue of acceptance and contentment. When we begin to improve ourselves, we then begin to feel contented and happy.

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Chapter 3. The Power of Positive Attitude

I am going to ask you to something very weird right now. First of all, I want you to listen to your thoughts. Now tell me, what thoughts fill your head? Would you label them as positive, or negative?

Now let's say you are walking down the street with these thoughts. Do you think anyone who would meet you would be able to tell you what's on your mind?

The answer to number one is up to you. But, the answer number two can be pretty generic. Although people will not be able to tell you exactly what you think, they will more or less have an idea of how you are feeling.

Here's another question. When you enter a party filled with friends, do they all fall silent as if something terrible had happened? Or does everybody there perk up as if waiting for something exciting to happen?

You know what? The answer to all these depends on your frame of mind.

Thoughts are very powerful. They affect your general attitude. The attitude you carry reflects on your appearance, too – unless, of course, you are a great actor.

And it doesn't end there. Your attitude can also affect people around you.

The type of attitude you carry depends on you. It can be either positive or negative.

Positive thoughts have a filling effect. They are admittedly invigorating. Plus, the people around the person carrying positive thoughts are usually energized by this type of attitude.

Negative thoughts on the other hand have a sapping effect on other people. Aside from making you look gloomy and sad, negative thoughts can turn a festive gathering into a funeral wake.

A positive attitude attracts people, while a negative attitude repels them. People tend to shy away from those who carry a negative attitude.

We can also define attitude as the way of looking at the world. If you choose to focus on the negative things in the world, more or less you have a negative attitude brewing up. However, if you choose to focus on the positive things, you are more likely carry a positive attitude.

You have much to gain from a very positive attitude. For one, studies have shown that a positive attitude promotes better health. Those with this kind of attitude also have more friends. Projecting a positive attitude also helps one to handle stress and problems better than those who have a negative attitude.

A positive attitude begins with a healthy self-image. If you will love the way you are and are satisfied, confident, and self-assured, you also make others around feel the same way.

A negative attitude, on the other hand, has, of course, an opposite effect. So, carrying a negative attitude has a twofold drawback. You feel bad about yourself, and you make others feel the same way.

If you want to have a positive attitude, you have to feature healthy thoughts. This is probably very hard to do nowadays since, all around us, the media feeds us nothing but negative thoughts. A study shows that for every 14 things a parent says to his or her child, only one is positive. This is truly a saddening thought.

If you want a healthier outlook in life, you need to think happy thoughts, and you have to hear positive things as well. So, what can you do? Well, for starters, you could see a funny movie, you could play with

children, spend some time telling jokes with friends. All these activities fill you with positive stimuli, which in turn promotes positive attitude.

Although it is impossible to keep ourselves from the negative things around us, you can still carry a positive attitude by focusing on the good things, the positive things in life.

And this positive attitude you now carry can be of benefit to other people. Sometimes when other people feel down, the thing people mostly do is try to give them advice. But sometimes, all they need is somebody to sit by them, and listen to them. If you have a positive attitude you may be able to cheer them up without even having to say anything.

If positive attitude is really great, why do people choose to adopt a negative attitude instead? One who carries a negative attitude may be actually sending a signal for attention. Before you get me wrong, feeling sad, angry, or gloomy is not wrong itself. But dwelling on these thoughts for far too long is not healthy either. There is a time to mourn.

As always, if you are beset by troubles, even in your darkest hour, focus on the good things in life, you will always have hope. Problems become something you can overcome.

You do not have much to lose by adopting a healthy, positive attitude. Studies show that such an attitude actually retards aging, makes you healthier, helps you develop a better stress coping mechanism, and has a very positive effect on all the people you meet every day. So, what's not to like about a positive attitude? Adopt one today.

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Chapter 4. Setting Goals - Easier Said, Easily Done

The basics of setting a goal is an open secret known by top-caliber athletes, successful businessmen and businesswomen and all types of achievers in all the different fields. The basics of setting goals give you short-term and long-term motivation and focus. They help you set focus on the acquisition of required knowledge and help you to plan and organize your resources and your time so that you can get the best out of your life.

Setting clearly defined short term and long term goals will enable you to measure your progress and achieve personal satisfaction once you have successfully met your goals. Charting your progress will also enable you to actually see the stages of completion leading to the actual realization of your goals. This eliminates the feeling of a long and pointless grind towards achieving your goal. Your self-confidence and level of competence will also improve as you will be more aware of your capabilities as you complete or achieve your goals.

The basics of goal settings will involve deciding what you really want to do with your personal life and what short term and long term goals you need to achieve it. Then you have to break down goals into the smaller and manageable targets that you must complete in your way to achieving your lifetime targets. Once you have your list waste no time in tackling your goals.

A good way to have a manageable list is to have a daily and weekly set of goals. By doing this you will be always in the position of going towards you life plan goals. Everyday will give you the opportunity to fulfill a certain goal giving you the feeling of accomplishment.

Here are some pointers that should be taken into consideration in setting goals and achieving them.

Attitude plays a very big role in setting and achieving your goals. You must ask yourself if any part of you or your mind holding you back towards completing your simplest goals? If there are any part of your behavior that is being a hindrance or puts your plans into disarray? If you do have problems in these areas then the immediate thing to do is to address this problem. Solutions may include a visit to a doctor or psychiatrist to control your emotions.

- ✓ Careers are made by good time management practice. Failing in a career is often attributed to bad time management. Careers require a lot from an individual which

often makes the career the life of the individual. Plan how far do you want to go into your career.

- ✓ Education is key in achieving your goals. If your goals require you to have a certain kind of degree or require a certain specialization or demand a certain skill to be developed, make plans in getting the appropriate education.
- ✓ Your family should never be left out of your plans. If you are just starting out then you have to decide if you want to be a parent or when you want to be a parent. You also have to know if you really would be a good parent and how well would you relate to extended family members
- ✓ Personal financial situations also play a major role in achieving your goals. Have a realistic goal on how much you really want to earn. You also must be able to create plans or stages by which you will be able to reach your earning potential.
- ✓ Physically gifted individuals may be able to achieve sports related goals like being in the National Basketball association or National Football League. Determining your physical capabilities should be one of your priorities. Physical limitations could however be conquered with proper planning.

As the saying goes -'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy', or something to that effect, is by all means true down to the last the letter. Giving yourself a little pleasure: should be included into your plans.

To start achieving your lifetime goals, set a quarter of a century plan, then break it down to 5 year plans then break it down again to 1 year plans, then 6 month plans then monthly plans, then weekly, then daily.

Then create a things-to-do list for the day.

Always review your plans and prepare for contingencies.

The basics of goal settings should not be so difficult once you get to be familiar with them.

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Chapter 5 Empower Your Communication

"A Piece of Blarney Stone" 10 ways to empower your communication

The Blarney Stone is a historical stone, or actually part of the Blarney Castle in Ireland where it was believed that kissing the stone can grant you the gift of gab. Yeah, it seems strange in this day and age, but who are we to question tradition? It's not like I'm saying that Santa Claus doesn't exist (OOPS!).

There is so much to know about conversation that anyone, even I, could ever realize. You can go though watching talk shows; radio programs; clubs dedicated to public speaking; ordinary conversations; certain rules still apply when it comes to interaction through words. It may sound tedious, I know, but even though it's your mouth that's doing the work, your brain works twice as hard to churn out a lot of things you know. So what better way to start learning to be an effective communication is to know the very person closest to you: yourself.

1. What you know.

Education is all about learning the basics, but to be an effective speaker is to practice what you've learned. My stint as guest at every Toastmasters' meeting I go to taught me that we all have our limitations, but that doesn't mean we can't learn to keep up and share what we know.

2. Listening.

It's just as important as asking questions. Sometimes listening to the sound of our own voice can teach us to be a little bit confident with ourselves and to say the things we believe in with conviction.

3. Humility

We all make mistakes, and sometimes we tend to slur our words, stutter, and probably mispronounce certain words even though we know what it means, but rarely use it only to impress listeners. So in a group, don't be afraid to ask if you're saying the right word properly and if they're unsure about it then make a joke out of it. I promise you it'll make everyone laugh and you can get away with it as well.

4. Eye Contact

There's a lot to say when it comes to directing your attention to your audience with an eye-catching gaze. It's important that you keep your focus when talking to a large group in a meeting or a gathering, even though he or she may be gorgeous.

5. Kidding around

A little bit of humor can do wonders to lift the tension, or worse boredom when making your speech. That way, you'll get the attention of the majority of the crowd and they'll feel that you're just as approachable, and as human to those who listen.

6. Be like the rest of them

Interaction is all about mingling with other people. You'll get a lot of ideas, as well as knowing what people make them as they are.

7. Me, Myself, and I

Admit it, there are times you sing to yourself in the shower. I know I do! Listening to the sound of your own voice while you practice your speech in front of a mirror can help correct the stress areas of your pitch. And while you're at it you can spruce up as well.

8. With a smile

A smile says it all much like eye contact. There's no point on grimacing or frowning in a meeting or a gathering, unless it's a wake. You can better express what you're saying when you smile.

9. A Role Model

There must be at least one or two people in your life you have listened to when they're at a public gathering or maybe at church. Sure they read their lines, but taking a mental note of how they emphasize what they say can help you once you take center stage.

10. Preparation

Make the best out of preparation rather than just scribbling notes and often in a hurried panic. Some people like to write things down on index cards, while other resort to being a little more silly as they look at their notes written on the palm of their hand (not for clammy hands, please). Just be comfortable with what you know since you enjoy your work.

And that about wraps it up. These suggestions are rather amateurish in edgewise, but I've learned to empower myself when it comes to public or private speaking and it never hurts to be with people to listen how they make conversations and meetings far more enjoyable as well as educational.

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Chapter 6 What Innovation Can Do to Your Life

It's a talent that everyone has, yet they think they don't. The power of innovation. If you've ever marvelled at somebody's creative prowess, guess what, you can create and innovate too. It just takes time. Everyone is born creative. The box of crayons in kindergarten were not limited to those who possessed potential; because the truth is, everybody has potential.

You know how long it took to learn to ride a bike or drive or to never commit the same mistake again? It's the same with innovation. It takes a bit of practice and a lot of time before this mind function comes easily when called. This article will teach you a few tips on how to bring innovation into your life.

Don't listen to what other people say. Follow the beat of your own drum. Allowing for the input of other people will only bring cacophony to the music you are trying to make. If you have an original idea, don't waste your time and effort trying to make people understand. They won't. And the help you will probably get comes in the form of negative feedback. If all those geniuses listened to their peers, we would probably still be living in the middle ages.

Spend time on it. I cannot stress that enough, although, please do not mistake this tip to tell you to quit your day job entirely. Do not. This involves some tricky time management but with a little discipline you'll be able to squeeze both in.

Exercise. Take a walk. Run a mile or two. Send all those endorphins coursing through your veins. Exercising certainly clears and relaxes your mind and allows for anything to pop up.

Record your dreams. Aren't some of them just the craziest things that your conscious mind would never have thought of? If you've had these dreams before, and I'm sure have, this only shows you the untapped innovative power you have lying within. So jot down those notes. Those dreams may just create an innovative spark in you.

Find your own style. You can always tell a Van Gogh from a Matisse. You'll know Hemingway wrote something by the choice of words on the paper. So it is the same with you. People will appreciate your innovation more because it is uniquely yours and that no one else would have thought of what you were thinking. That will let people see how valuable an asset you are.

Don't hide behind nifty gadgets or tools. You don't need the most expensive set of paints to produce a masterpiece. The same way with writing. You don't need some expensive fountain pen and really smooth paper for a bestseller. In fact, J.K. Rowling wrote the first book of the Harry Potter Series on bits of tissue. So what if you've got an expensive SLR camera if you're a crappy photographer? Who cares if you've got a blinging laptop if you can't write at all? The artist actually reduces the number of tools he has as he gets better at his craft: he knows what works and what doesn't.

Nothing will work without passion. What wakes you up in the mornings? What keeps the flame burning? What is the one thing that you'll die if you don't do? Sometimes people with talent are overtaken by the people who want it more. Think the hare and the tortoise. Ellen Degeneres once said that if you're not doing something that you want to do, then you don't really want to do it. And that's true. Sometimes you just want something so bad you become a virtual unstoppable. And that is passion. Passion will keep you going.

Don't worry about inspiration. You can't force it; inspiration hits when you least expect it to, for those unpredictable yet inevitable moments you should prepare. An idea could strike you on the subway, yet alas, you poor unfortunate soul; you have no sheet of paper to scribble down a thought that could change the world. Avoid these disasters. Have a pen and paper within your arm's reach at all times.

I hope this article has helped you bring more innovation into your life. Keep in mind that you're doing these things for your own satisfaction and not anybody else's. But soon enough they will notice, and everything should snowball from there.

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