

## **Ten steps to developing your leadership skills**

In the business literature there are two camps: one says that leaders are made, not born and the other believes in natural born leaders who have not been de-programmed along the way. Regardless of what camp you belong to, here are ten easy steps you can take to awaken or develop the leader in you:

### **1. Humility**

To be a highly successful leader, you must humble yourself and be willing to serve others. Nobody wants to follow someone who is arrogant. Be a bit like a child, always curious, always hungry for knowledge and always willing to try/learn new things. It will help you to become genuinely interested in people because you want to learn from them. And because you want to learn and grow, you will be a far more effective listener, which is arguably the most important leadership communication tool. When people sense you are genuinely interested in them and willing to listen to them, they will naturally be interested in you and will listen to what you have to say, too.

### **2. Analyse yourself**

Make stock of your own Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This is a useful and easy way to gain access to self-knowledge, self-respect and

self-confidence, which are very important, since if you don't have belief and confidence in your own views and goals then how can you expect other to believe in you and follow your leadership?

Start by listing all your Strengths including your accomplishments. Then write down all your Weaknesses and what needs to be improved. Make sure to include any doubts, anxieties, fears, and worries that you may have. By bringing the latter to conscious awareness you can begin to slay them.

Next, proceed by listing all the Opportunities you see available to you for using your strengths. Finally, write down all the Threats or obstacles that are currently preventing you, or that you think you will encounter along the way, to achieve your dreams. Write down this list and revisit it as needed but at least once year repeat the exercise; but be honest!

### **3. Follow your heart**

Regardless of how busy you are, always take time to do what you love doing. Being an alive and interesting person vitalizes others. When you are pursuing your passions, people around you see passion, energy and determination. It gives you credibility in what you do in the business, too, and helps to make you into a charismatic leader.

If you feel you don't have time, I suggest that you record your activities for a week and analyse it for time wasted. Look for lack of efficiency as well, since when you are tired, burnt out or fed up, tasks usually take considerably longer to complete as your concentration is low. Having a good hobby or passion helps to revive and relax you and thus helps you to become more efficient as well.

#### **4. Dream big**

If you want to be larger than life, you need a dream that is larger than life. It takes the same amount of time to dream small and dream big. So be bold and write down your "Biggest Dream". Don't weight what is possible or likely, just go for it; aim to be the new Bill gates, or go for the Pulitzer or the Nobel Prize; aim the highest you possibly can. After you have written down your dream, list every single reason why you can achieve your dream. Next, write down every reason why you feel like you cannot achieve them and tackle each of them; they often are self-generated and live in your mind more than in the real world. So start breaking down the mental barriers that keep you from achieving you Dream.

#### **5. Vision**

If you cannot see yourself winning that award and feel the tears of triumph streaming down your face, it is unlikely you will be able to lead yourself or others to victory. Visualize what it would be like accomplishing your dream. See it, smell it, taste it, hear it, feel it in your gut. But most importantly, believe fully and unquestionably that you WILL achieve it. It is not about realism at this stage, it is about putting all what you have to work in achieving your dream and it means your full mental and emotional energy. It is important to remember that your body language and the tone of voice are testament to your self-confidence. If you have self-doubts it is your body language and voice that give you away first.

#### **6. Perseverance**

Victory belongs to those who want it the most and stay in the race the longest. Now that you have a dream, make sure you make a step towards it every day. Take stock every evening of what you have done/achieved that day and make a plan for the following day.

## **7. Honor Your Word**

Every time you break your word, you lose power as much as you lose trust. Successful leadership starts at assessing correctly what promises you can keep and taking full responsibility for keeping your word. You only have one reputation in life; make your word worthy of gold.

## **8. Get a Mentor**

Find yourself a mentor who has already achieved a high degree of success in your (or some relevant) field. Don't be afraid to ask your hero to be your mentor, since you have got nothing to lose. Most people like to be appreciated and if you look enthusiastic, bright and determined enough, most will help you.

In addition to mentors, take time to study autobiographies of the great leaders that you admire. Learn everything you can from their experiences and try to model some of their successful behaviors.

## **9. Be Yourself**

Never copy or imitate your mentor/hero, like a parrot. Everyone has vastly different leadership styles and personality and you must find your own voice for leading by the ideas and principles you have learned.

You almost certainly will make mistakes along the way, but don't be afraid of them; learn from them. Be honest about them, too (no need to brag about them, though), since they can help you build your self-knowledge just as well as your reputation as a "leader with the human touch", which will make it easier for many under your leadership to relate to you.

## **10. Innovate**

Finally, be an innovator. The capability and the dare to make changes are the two key attributes of leaders; they are what distinguish leaders from followers. Share your ideas and you will find that if you do it right, the more help you give, the more respect you get in return. Ultimately, it is your success in making people follow your ideas that will mark you as a great leader.

But remember, that the only way to get what you want as a leader is by helping enough people get what they want first. As Sir Winston Churchill once said, “We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.”