

# Leading By Example

Peter Thatcher



PETER THATCHER

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# PREFACE

Anyone can be a leader, but to be a successful leader can be a real challenge. A leader needs to be able to draw on a vast array of skills and attributes, and be able to apply them at the right time and in the right way. Above all, a leader has to recognise that his/her success will ultimately depend on the people that he/she leads, which means creating an environment in which all of these people can flourish.

What does a leader need to do to create this environment? This book suggests that it depends to a great extent on the example set by the leader, whose behaviour sets the tone and creates the culture for a team or an organisation. If the leader is not always honest, how can team members be expected to be? If the leader is not committed to the vision, how can team members be expected to be? Put simply, a successful leader has to behave at least as well as he/she asks of everyone he/she purports to lead.

People are influenced by the example they are shown. The example set by any leader will have a significant impact on the long-term success, or otherwise, of their team or organisation. People consciously or subconsciously seek role models to see how they do things, and then replicate those behaviours.

Leading by example is not exactly rocket science. Many of the behaviours that are covered in this book require little more than behaving as a decent, considerate human when dealing with others. This combined with a clear vision and commitment to do the best as possible. So whether you are a leader of a large organisation employing thousands of people, a children's sports coach or even a parent, there are ideas in this book that should help you to be more successful at what you do.

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Peter Thatcher, the founder of Aptus Personal Development Consultants, is the author of this publication. Peter has over 25 years experience in training, consulting and coaching in the UK and overseas; providing effective, practical, down-to-earth advice based on his own business experience and the application of relevant management thinking.

As a trainer and coach, Peter's focus is simply to help people do their jobs better by helping them develop their self-confidence, and equipping them with the necessary skills and behaviours to up their game.

The advice that Peter is able to share with his clients is based on his own leadership and management experience as a company director and running his own training consultancy. Drawing on his many years of experience in working as a consultant to a wide range of businesses, he is able to offer insights into best practice and to draw on the experiences of others as to what does and doesn't work.

Aptus Personal Development Consultants offer bespoke training courses to organisations from a variety of business sectors, and provides speakers at UK and international conferences covering:

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

*True leadership is about leading by example*

## WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

Fundamentally, leadership is about people. When people need to work together to achieve an objective, they need leadership. When people are uncertain what to do next, they need leadership. When people are struggling to overcome difficult situations, they need leadership.

Whichever definition you favour, and there are many to choose from, leadership is about getting the best from people. It is underpinned by a real belief in people and a desire to want to help those people make the most of their talents.

Success in any organisation depends on people and so great leaders believe, and behave in accordance with that belief; that real, long-term success is best delivered through embracing the skills and energies of people.

Leadership is also about vision. Leaders need a clear vision of the future goal, but they will not be able to achieve that vision unless they take the people that they lead along with them. A leader without followers is plainly no leader at all, and neither is a leader who has unwilling followers. So leadership involves winning people's hearts and minds, persuading them to share and embrace that vision, and then motivating them to give of their best to help achieve it. Leaders must therefore understand what motivates people, recognising that people are different and that those differences should be embraced.

Of course, the word leadership comes from the verb 'to lead', the dictionary definition of which includes 'guide or show the way' and 'guide by persuasion or example'. So leadership must be about showing the way; not only creating the vision, but also showing by example what people should do and how they should behave. True leadership is not therefore about telling people what to do, giving orders and expecting them to be carried out without explanation or guidance. People are generally too bright and skilled for that to be an appropriate way to lead, and so they need to be free to realise their full potential. Leaders must therefore set high standards in everything that they do for others to follow.

Leaders should be careful never to forget how much they depend on people. They should never believe too much in their own ability, never believe that they always know best and

never rely purely on their status as a leader to tell others what to do. Leaders should never see themselves as better than the people they are trying to lead and should not put themselves, or allow others to put them on a pedestal that creates a barrier between themselves and those people that they depend on.

Achieving success for an organisation, while at the same time developing and nurturing people and taking real delight from their success, means that leadership can, and should be a positive, exciting, energizing and fulfilling role. For those leaders who find leadership a lonely and isolated role, it is most likely because they have not understood and embraced the people aspect of leadership.

So leadership is about human interactions and relationships, not about theoretical models. A team or organisation's success, depends greatly on the extent to which the leader is able to set the tone of a positive culture through his/her behavior. Truly effective leadership is about creating the right environment, recruiting the right people, and then leading by example.

## **WHO IS A LEADER?**

Too often, leadership is associated with a title. However, the reality is that leadership is about what people do. Titles may give someone authority and perhaps power, but trust and respect are only given to people because of their behaviour.

Although leaders may be CEO's of large multinational organisations, heads of nations or large public organisations, most are typically ordinary people who have simply been asked to do a job which involves getting other people to help in achieving an objective. Leadership is often only a temporary role when, for example, a particular task or project requires someone to take the role of leader to accomplish a specific outcome.

For some people, leadership is only a part-time role, So in addition to leading, they also spend time managing resources and carrying out tasks alongside the other team members. It is important then, that people understand when they are taking on a leadership role, and when they are not, so that they behave in the right way for the role that they are fulfilling at any particular time.

Sometimes leaders are formally given the role of leader, while in other situations people assume that role. Regardless of how someone becomes a leader, the principles of leadership apply to all situations in which a person takes on that role. It may be in work: leading a meeting, leading a project team, leading a business department, leading a business division or as head of the whole organisation. Equally, there are many situations outside of work



where people become leaders. For example; as a parent, coaching a sports team, leading a music group, leading a young persons' group, leading a keep-fit class or leading a group on a walk up a mountain.

As there are so many occasions when people need to behave as leaders, does this mean that anyone can be a leader? The simplest and often the most effective form of leadership is example, and everyone can set an example. So yes, anyone can be a leader. After all, many of the ideal leadership behaviours are exactly the same behaviours that any decent person should follow in their behaviors with others.

### **WHY IS EXAMPLE SO IMPORTANT?**

Put simply, example, like laughter, is infectious – it is capable of affecting the emotions and attitudes of anyone who is exposed to it.

Throughout our lives, we have all been, and continue to be influenced by the behaviour of others; whether it is the example set by parents, teachers, work colleagues, friends, sportstars, celebrities, politicians or just people that we meet any and every day. We are influenced by what we see other people doing and how they are behaving. In some cases we respond to other people's examples by making a conscious choice as to how we behave, but in other cases the influences are more subtle and we are less aware of our behaviours changing.

So whether they like it or not, leaders lead by example. Leaders are role models. Of course people can, and should make independent choices. They should not just be blind followers doing whatever the leader does, but the leader's behaviour is a reference point. A leader's behaviour, good and bad, will affect the behaviour of others, So clearly, leaders need to focus on setting a good example to encourage positive behaviours from the people that they lead.

By their own example, leaders need to instil in the people that they lead the right values and behaviours. Leaders should not rely on rules and regulations to set down how people should behave. People are contrary beings. If told not to do something, there is a temptation to do the opposite. Think of a child who is told not to touch something! Telling people how to behave; threatening them with punishment if they fail to behave in the right way or offering financial incentives for positive behaviours, are likely to achieve only short-term success. In the long-term, people need to recognise for themselves why behaving in a certain way has positive results, and the leader's positive example will undoubtedly be a powerful influence.

A leader's words and actions set the tone for the people he/she leads. A leader is never off duty, his/her behaviour is constantly being scrutinised for verbal and non-verbal signals which

will be interpreted, commented on and copied. How the leader approaches opportunities and meets challenges actively, influences the approach of everyone he/she leads. Leaders need to consistently and persistently behave the right way, and then encourage those good behaviours to pervade the whole organisation.

If leaders' behaviour is to influence that of the people that they lead, then they must behave in a consistent manner. They need to behave consistently every day in their response to similar situations, and in the way that they meet different challenges. They also need to demonstrate consistency between their actions and words. It is no good adopting a 'do as I say' philosophy, as this will quickly dampen enthusiasm and morale, and the levels of cynicism will rise. Why should anyone follow an instruction that the instructor is not following themselves? Leaders must adopt a 'do as I do' philosophy, or using a cliché, they must 'walk the talk'. Only by maintaining this consistency can leaders hope to embed positive behaviours in their team, and create the positive culture that they should be aiming for.

While setting the right example does not ensure that everyone will follow that positive behaviour, setting the wrong example is very unlikely to result in people behaving well. Leaders cannot behave in a way that they ask their people not to. The way that leaders work and behave will be the best that they can reasonably expect from the people they lead. If leaders set low standards by their own actions and behaviours, then they are to blame for low standards in the people that they lead.

### Challenges

Spend a few minutes thinking about leaders in your organisation who have influenced you in a positive way. What did they do, or not do, and how did that impact on you and your behaviour?

What does this reflection tell you about your own behaviours and the impact that you might be having on people around you?

## HOW THIS BOOK WILL HELP YOU

Whether you are preparing for a leadership role, have experience as a leader, or perhaps you are new to leadership; this book contains straightforward, practical advice for leadership roles both in and outside of work. These ideas will help you become a more effective leader, simply by the example that you set to those whom you lead, emphasising the most important positive behaviours to focus on.

While not everyone has *all* of the necessary skills and behaviours to be a perfect leader, everyone can be an effective role model and therefore achieve success as a leader.

By recognising where you can set a better example, and where necessary changing your behaviours, you can have a significant impact on others. You are more likely to be able to create a more positive, motivated, inclusive, supportive and successful team.

If you do recognise that by changing your behaviour you would become a more effective leader, then you perhaps also need to reflect on the best way to introduce to others how you plan to change. It is always advisable to explain change rather than simply changing. If people understand what you are trying to do, and why, they are more likely to be supportive. Showing that you recognise that you could improve your own behaviours and being humble enough to ask for people's views, are themselves important leadership examples.

The book is set out in chapters, with each chapter covering one behaviour. For ease of reference, the book refers to leading a *team*. In this context, *team* should be taken to refer to any group of people that a leader leads, whether it be two people on a small project or thousands of people in a whole organisation.

At the end of each chapter, there are a number of challenges which are posed to help you reflect on the example that you are currently setting, and to think how you can improve and set a better example.

For many of the behaviours, given that they typically reflect how people should generally behave towards others anyway, this book will hopefully confirm that you are already setting a good example. Where that is the case, the challenge is then to ask yourself whether you consistently behave in the right way. The answer is probably „not always“, Few people ever do. If your answer is “not always” then you may benefit from reflecting on the situations where you have behaved inappropriately, and make a personal commitment that when faced with similar challenges and opportunities, you will set a better example.

With many of the behaviours, you may find it difficult to be certain how you normally behave and whether you behave in a consistent manner. The only way that you can really know how you behave is to ask for feedback from people that you trust. Other people's perception of you will ultimately define whether you are in fact a good role model or not. Your own opinion of yourself is of little consequence.

Leading by setting a good example with regard to all of these behaviours may be a daunting challenge, but none of the behaviours are individually difficult to do. Setting a better example is largely an attitude of mind, but also requires determination, commitment and openness. None of us are perfect, nor are we ever likely to be. If everyone can be a little bit better tomorrow than today, then in time we will all be a lot better. As a colleague of mine often says “Small steps will take you a long way if you keep walking long enough”.

## 2 WHAT MAKES A GOOD LEADER?

*The key to successful leadership is to be able to influence others*

Good leaders are people-oriented. They are followed mainly because people trust and respect them not because of their specific professional or technical skills. Technical and intellectual ability are not the prime characteristics of great leaders. Too often people are promoted into leadership positions because of their technical competence, but they are unable to lead effectively because they do not have, or do not demonstrate, the necessary behavioural characteristics.

So what makes a good leader?

A good leader is undoubtedly someone who clearly understands the role and responsibilities of leadership, and is committed to lead their team to a better future. A good leader will typically be someone who leads by example and who:

- Behaves with integrity.
- Is trusted and trusting.
- Is respected and respectful.
- Communicates quickly, widely and effectively.
- Seeks out and acts on other people's views.
- Recognises the contributions of others.
- Is positive and enthusiastic.
- Nurtures, supports and motivates others.
- Is personally effective.
- Never stops learning.

These are fundamental behaviours that leaders must demonstrate, if they are to get the best out of the people that they lead. Setting the right example by demonstrably living out these behaviours will result in a positive, motivated, inclusive and ultimately successful working environment.

Good leaders are conscious about the way that they come across to others. They want to do the right things and behave in the right way, so that they will be seen as being credible and trustworthy. They can then become effective role models for others who identify with these positive behaviours, and who can clearly see the link between their leader's personal values and those of their team.

A common question, and an ongoing debate, is whether good leadership is innate; in that good leaders naturally possess the necessary traits, or whether it can be learned and developed. Of course some leadership traits, or behaviours, are more natural to some than others, but the fundamental behaviours are within us all. Anyone who is open-minded to what is needed and has the desire to practice what is learnt, they can develop the necessary skills and behaviours. People who really want to be a good leader can become one.

### **Challenges**

How would you rate yourself against each of the behaviours/traits listed above?

Ask others to rate you against each of the behaviours/traits listed above, and to say why they rate you in the way that they do.

Where your own view differs from that of other people, spend some time understanding each other's point of view.

### 3 BEHAVE WITH INTEGRITY

*Leaders should have a clear set of personal values, understood by them and their team*

You should not be surprised by the fact that this is the first behaviour to be considered in this book, because integrity is the rock on which all of a leader's behaviours should be based.

Most people would agree that behaving with integrity is important, but what exactly does it mean? Definitions of integrity typically refer to honesty, truthfulness and keeping promises. Important as these things are however, and they are very important, integrity is more than that. Integrity is about a person's character and their values. It is about having sound ethical principles and a clear moral compass. More importantly, it is about a person behaving in accordance with those principles even if it is not in his/her personal interest.

Whether or not someone behaves with integrity is down to their personal motives. It is important for leaders to reflect honestly on those motives before doing or saying something.



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It is easy for leaders to justify their words, actions or inactions as being for other people's benefit, when in reality personal gain was the driving force.

Take, for example, a leader who does not communicate the truth about a difficult situation because he/she does not want to deal with the consequences, but then justifies that dishonesty on the basis of not wanting to upset other people. Or the leader who persuades his/her team to commit to a project, when his/her underlying motivation for taking on the project is self-promotion.

For anyone and everyone, behaving with integrity means doing the right thing in accordance with what they truly believe and value. It means having a clear conscience.

So if integrity means behaving in accordance with a set of personal values and beliefs, leaders first need to have an understanding of what their own values and beliefs actually are. Essentially, they need their own personal moral code.

For leaders, as with everyone else, personal values help them to decide what they should and should not do. They provide the foundations on which their behaviours are set. They influence the decisions they make, what they do, what they say and how they say it. Personal values are not things that can be switched on and off to suit the situation. Leaders are required to live out their values every day and they need to behave consistently in accordance with those values, so that people can depend on their words and actions in all situations.

Setting personal values and then sticking to them can be hard. A common failing is that many people have 'convenient values', which means that they live by certain values only when it is convenient for them to do so. For example, most people would identify that being honest and truthful is an important value, and that people should abide by the law. However many people who have 'abide by the law' as a personal value, then seek to justify their own or other people's behaviour when laws and regulations are broken. Consider those people who justify speeding when driving on a motorway; or those people who justify parking in a no-parking zone while they pop into a shop because they do not want to pay to park for an hour; or those people who are undercharged in a shop and do not tell the cashier because they feel somehow entitled to having something for nothing. Where is the integrity in these behaviours? How is knowing that you have not paid for something in a shop any less dishonest than actually stealing something? Having convenient values is a little better than having no values at all.

In leadership, convenient values are most often reflected by convenient truths - leaders who do not tell the truth because it is beneficial not to do so, either for them personally or for their team. It might be a leader promising a key team member, that they will get a



promotion in the hope that it will prevent them leaving the organisation. When in reality the leader knows that it is highly unlikely that the person will be promoted. It might be telling investors or lenders that the business is performing better than it really is, so that they will not withdraw their capital or so they will not seek to replace the leaders! It might be promising customers that the business can deliver what they want by a deadline, as a way of securing a contract even though it is unlikely to happen. The list of convenient truths is a long one, and all of them demonstrate a lack of integrity if a leader's values are based on honesty.

A leader's behaviours set the tone for everyone in the team. If the leader is seen to have convenient values, then by implication that gives permission for everyone else to behave in the same way.

Behaving with integrity is also about standing up for what is right, however uncomfortable that might be. It means dealing with situations when people are being dishonest, treating others unfairly or behaving unethically.

Many teams have values that everyone is expected to abide by. This is a very positive statement, as it sets out for the whole team who they are and what they stand for, and sets the standards by which team members will be judged. Making a public statement of values is about transparency and adds credibility to a team. If these values are not publicly stated, then it is all too easy to avoid behaving in accordance with them because there is no accountability.

In the same way that publicly stated team values are important, each leader should have their own set of values which their team should be aware of. Team members need to understand what their leader stands for, and then see clear evidence of the leader behaving in accordance with those values. Leaders need to 'walk the talk'. They need to have the same expectations of themselves as they have of their team, and the team needs to understand what those expectations are and what they are based on.

A team's culture and identity is set by the leadership, so leaders can only expect their team to behave with integrity if they do so themselves. The leader's role is to model appropriate behaviours and to set the tone and standards for everyone to follow. Leaders need to set the right example, so that people clearly understand what is expected of them.

Maintaining integrity in the workplace can be very challenging. Leaders are often under enormous pressure and the temptation to give way to some of those pressures is significant. It takes courage and a resolute belief in what is right not to give in to these many demands. New leaders are perhaps under particular pressure to behave in a certain way, which may be contrary to their values and beliefs. The demands of trying to achieve short-term objectives



and establish their credibility quickly, may prove to be especially challenging. For all leaders, behaving with integrity all of the time is hard, very hard. Business leaders need to focus on behaving in the right way constantly, so that when there are tough decisions to make they are made in accordance with the leader's core values and beliefs, and not in response to the demands of others. Only then can a leader have a clear conscience.

While there may be negative, short-term consequences of behaving with integrity, in the long-term the leader and the team will gain significant benefits. Integrity helps people to trust their leader. It is said that people may be forgiven for many things, but never a lack of integrity.

Behaving with integrity also means taking personal responsibility. A leader is in a unique position to be able to take the credit when things go well, but to easily shift the blame onto others when things go wrong. For all human beings, when things go wrong it is tempting to 'take flight' and try to avoid the personal consequences of what happened, to deny any personal responsibility and to pass the blame onto other people. This all too common 'blame culture' will slowly but surely destroy a team, and in time, the whole organisation.

So while for leaders, it may be an easy and tempting course of action to shift the blame onto others, behaving with integrity should cause the leader to ask themselves "what can I now do to help sort this was, problem out?". By their own example, leaders should shift the focus from worrying about whose fault it was onto resolving the problem and being better in the future.

All leaders should remember that a mistake is an opportunity to say sorry, to learn lessons and to do things better in the future. People want their leaders to show honesty and humility in admitting their mistakes. Most people typically know whose fault something is, and resent being treated as fools by their leaders when they try to avoid responsibility.

Successful organisations need strong leaders who are prepared to take responsibility for the actions of their teams. Such leaders clearly communicate that the buck stops with them.

Being accountable for their own actions, putting their own hand up to acknowledge that they could have done things better, will encourage others to do the same. Leaders need to 'look in the mirror' and honestly reflect on the part that they played in what happened. Whenever something has gone wrong within the team, the leader must take some responsibility. It is important for leaders to openly take personal responsibility and then to clearly demonstrate the actions they have taken, and will take, to deal with the problem. Their focus should now be on looking ahead, and on doing things better in the future.

Leaders who have the strength of character to assume personal responsibility in this way, and by their example encourage others to do the same, will have a significant influence on building a trusting environment within their team. Creating an environment where people accept personal responsibility and do not immediately look to apportion blame onto others, will quickly make the place of work one that is creative, forward-looking, positive and enjoyable.

Leaders who behave with integrity are authentic. Behaving authentically means being true to oneself, not only to one's own values and beliefs, but also being genuine and not acting out a role to achieve a specific purpose. It means recognising one's strengths and weaknesses and not trying to create a false impression by putting on an act. It is also about not falsely hiding personal emotions and ambitions. Any leader who has learned skills and how to behave in certain situations to maximise their influence, but does not truly believe in what they are doing or saying, or why for that matter, is a fraud. Sooner or later, they will be seen for what they really are. Their credibility as an authentic leader is lost.

Authentic leaders are those who ultimately lead in accordance with their own convictions. Leaders must be true to themselves. Yes, people should always be open to learning from others, but they should focus on making the best of their own skills and characteristics. They should not try to be a clone of other people. Only in this way will they be a credible leader.

### **Challenges**

What sort of team do you want to lead?

What are your personal values? Does your team know what you stand for?

Do you consistently behave in accordance with your personal values?

Do you have team values that everyone understands and abides by?

Do you deal with inappropriate behaviour?

What sort of example are you setting to your team by your own behaviour?

## 4 BE TRUSTING AND TRUSTWORTHY

*Trust is established because of what we say and what we do*

It is an unfortunate indictment of the current business world, and society generally, that there are so many reports and stories about how little trust people have in their leaders. However unjust it may be to generalise too much about this lack of trust, the reality is that too many leaders do not behave in the right way to earn the trust of the people that they are supposed to be leading.

Leaders' behaviours should reflect the truism that while some people are naturally more inclined to trust others, they have a greater propensity to trust. For most people trust has to be earned, as they take account of the way that other people behave. It is also typically true to say that even though for some people it may take a long time before they fully trust another person, for most people that trust can be destroyed in an instant by inappropriate words or actions. Leaders therefore need to behave appropriately at all times, working hard to build trust. While at the same time being careful to avoid doing or saying anything that may damage fragile, trusting relationships.

In considering what leaders should do to become more trustworthy, perhaps the starting point is to reflect on what is meant by the word trust? Definitions of trust often refer to having a belief in another person, a belief in their ability and their honesty, a belief that they can be relied upon and a confidence in their actions. So what do leaders need to do to earn the trust of others?

On the face of it, earning the trust of others should be relatively easy, as the required behaviours simply reflect how people should behave towards each other all of the time anyway; tell the truth, treat people with respect, treat people fairly, support people, communicate openly and honestly and always deliver on promises. If every leader and every team member adopt these behaviours, then they will help to create a more trusting environment. Consequently, a more positive, motivated and successful team.

As with all leadership behaviours, trust must be underpinned by integrity. There is no point leaders pretending that they believe someone or that they trust them to do something, and then covertly check up on them. Such behaviour is almost worse than openly not trusting someone in the first place!

The first step in building trust is for leaders to trust their team. Leaders need to show that they trust other people before they can reasonably expect to be trusted. It is unfair and unreasonable for a leader not to extend trust to people in the team and yet still expect to be trusted themselves. It is the leader's responsibility to set a positive example to his/her team; that the culture and beliefs are based around trust, and that the team will only be successful when there is mutual trust.

A leader should place great emphasis on creating a trusting environment for his/her team. Trusting others is based on the premise that people are fundamentally good, tell the truth and will try to do their best. All leaders, by their own example of how they behave towards others, are responsible for leading the way and creating a culture of trust.

This does not mean that leaders have to trust others completely and without reservation, what you might call blind trust. Instead leaders need to look for opportunities to openly extend their trust to other people, while taking account of the other person's character and competence, and also the potential risk involved in the particular situation. As people then prove themselves to be trustworthy, more trust is extended in more situations. When a leader shows trust and belief in other people's skills and abilities, he/she can then harness their energy, their commitment and their talent to develop a high performing team.

Delegation is an important skill for leaders to develop, so that they can free up their own time to focus on what they should be doing, and to make the best use of the skills of the people within their team. Thereby, offering team members opportunities to fulfil their own ambitions. To delegate effectively, leaders need to show that they believe in other people's ability. They need to show that they have confidence in people by allowing them the flexibility to work in their own way, provided it does not adversely affect anyone else, and should not meddle or keep checking on them. Treating people in this way says, 'I trust you to deliver the right standard of work on time' and 'I believe in you'. If leaders fail to show appropriate trust, and in turn become overbearing, they will reduce people's self-confidence. This will only stifle their initiative and creativity.

It is important to avoid overly supervising people. Instead, leaders should manage any potential risk by agreeing specific times to review progress. Otherwise people should be encouraged and trusted to seek help and guidance when they need it.

Leaders also need to create a culture of open communication. By communicating quickly and widely, they will make it clear that they trust people to keep confidences and not to misuse that information. Withholding information, being inappropriately secretive or only disclosing information to select members of the team, sends out a negative message that people are not trustworthy.

So when a leader sets a positive example of openly trusting others and showing that he/she believes in them, that leader will set the standards for others to follow. By being more trusting of others, a leader will in turn be more trusted.

In addition to showing trust to team members, there are a number of specific, positive behaviours that leaders should adopt if they are justifiably to earn the trust of their team, all of which set the right example for creating the right culture in their team.

A fundamental behaviour must be for leaders to always tell the truth; to always keep their word. There cannot be trust without honesty. It means telling the whole truth, without spin or distortion as soon as possible, even when it is bad news. While the truth may hurt, when it is told with tact and sensitivity, it is unequivocally the right thing to do. Most people are fairly perceptive about what is true and so hiding the truth, telling untruths, manipulating information, no matter how apparently trivial the issue might be in the leader's eyes, will damage the trust relationship and send out a message that dishonesty is acceptable behaviour for everyone.

Leaders should also be careful to avoid creating a culture, where people say only what they think others want to hear. A nice team is often a dishonest and underperforming team. Instead, leaders should always be clear and straightforward with their messages, so that there is no room for doubt as to what they mean and what they want. They should always be clear about their expectations of themselves and others.

Another important behaviour, which is sometimes easier to say than do, is for leaders to always deliver on their promises and so by their example, create such a culture within their team. This involves making promises in the first place, so that they are seen to be accountable for their actions and performance, and then delivering on those promises. Clearly people will soon lose trust in others who over-promise and under-deliver. However, it is not uncommon to see leaders encouraging behaviour that is designed to impress other people by deliberately under-promising and over-delivering, so that expectations can be exceeded. A simple example would be to agree a date for delivery of a project, knowing that it will be completed before then, so that the recipient will be led to believe that the project team have performed above expectations. This is dishonest and is not delivering on a promise. People want to receive exactly what they thought they were going to receive, at exactly the time when they thought they were going to receive it. When circumstances change which mean that something may happen on a different timescale, this should be communicated as soon as possible to let the other person know what is happening and to manage their expectations.

Leaders should never take the credit for other people's efforts and successes. It is important that they acknowledge the contributions of others both privately, so that people's efforts are recognised, and publicly, so that they explicitly recognise the contributions of others. Leaders cannot then be accused of trying to take the credit for successes.

Conversely, when things go wrong, leaders need to publicly stand up for their team. People need to know that they will be supported and that there will not be a blame culture. In turn, when leaders make mistakes they should quickly admit their mistakes and look to put things right.

Without doubt, leaders should always respect confidences. They should never disclose information told to them in confidence without the express permission of the other person. They should also be careful about what they say in public about other people, whether team members or other people outside the team. On those occasions when they do talk about other people in conversations, the safest approach to adopt is to always talk about them as if they were present in the conversation. At the very least, this should mean that nothing unpleasant or hurtful is ever said in public. This behaviour helps create a culture within a team that the leader and team members can be trusted to deal with information sensitively.



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Leaders should always behave fairly, and be seen to behave fairly, in the way that they treat all team members. They should always base their decisions on evidence and not on assumption or prejudice.

One of the greatest causes of lack of trust in leaders is when others believe that they are acting out of self interest, rather than for the genuine benefit of all parties involved. In many situations there is an element of self interest, but what matters is whether the leader is really motivated to achieve the best outcome for others, and that any desire for personal benefit is a secondary consideration. It is simply about doing the right thing by the other person and being seen to do the right thing.

### **Challenges**

How much do you trust individual members of your team?

To what extent do you show that you trust them?

If you do not fully trust some people, is that lack of trust based on evidence or emotion?

What can you do to be more trusting of others?

What can you do to become more trustworthy?

What sort of example are you setting to your team by your own behaviour?

## 5 RESPECT OTHERS FOR WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY SAY

*Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself  
(or ideally, treat others better than you would like to be treated yourself)*

People willingly and loyally follow great leaders largely because they trust and respect them, not because of their titles or status, and leaders gain that respect from the way that they behave towards others. All leaders should be conscious that people notice and remember how they have been treated by their leaders, and how others around them have been treated, and that their behaviours will reflect that treatment.

A leader who does not respect each individual member of his/her team, cannot reasonably expect to be given respect by any team member. People typically reciprocate behaviour, both positive and negative. If people feel that they have been listened to, they will typically respond by listening to others. On the other hand, if they feel they have been treated unfairly by their leaders, they will be less supportive of those leaders and less committed to their vision.

Like all of the other behaviours, respecting others has to be done with integrity. There is no point in giving the impression of caring about others or valuing their opinions, if those concerns and interests are not genuine. That behaviour in itself is both dishonest and disrespectful.

What does showing respect mean? Words that come to mind include consideration, thoughtfulness, admiration, fairness and courtesy.

Showing genuine respect for other people should be one of the easiest things for a leader to do. It is after all doing little else other than behaving as a decent human being towards others. Sadly, on all too many occasions, as people move up the hierarchical ladder to become leaders, they fail to show this basic human and leadership behaviour as often as they should. All leaders should prioritise respecting others and developing a culture of mutual respect throughout their team.

Business success largely depends on the way that people are treated, whether they are colleagues, customers, suppliers or members of the public. A culture of respect towards all of these groups of people, will go a long way to building the reputation and success of any organisation.



It is said that you can judge a person's character by the way that he/she treats people. A leader will be judged by his/her team on this basis. A leader will judge his/her team and team members will judge each other on the same basis. A high performing team therefore needs to treat each other and non-team members in the right way, and it is the leader who sets the behavioural standards by the way that he/she behaves.

Respect for others begins with personal values; the belief that everyone has something positive to contribute irrespective of their role, job title, background and character. People should be judged according to their contribution to the team, not their hierarchical status. Showing respect means treating people as individuals and showing that they are each valued. People will flourish when they realise that they matter.

Leaders need to set the standards for all team members to follow, in that everyone should be accorded the same level of respect irrespective of the job they do and the title they carry. That level of respect should be set at the highest level, not the lowest.

Leaders need to be tolerant and open-minded, to value the different perspectives that people have on situations, and so to encourage people to say what they think and feel. People should be respected for who they are and what they say. A good rule to follow in this regard is to assume that people have good intentions.

By their own behaviour, leaders need to create an environment of mutual respect of differences in background, gender, ethnicity and culture. They should ensure that their teams embrace diversity, recognising that diverse teams offer a richness of personalities, experiences and skills that can be used to benefit everyone.

As already mentioned, showing respect means being considerate, thoughtful, courteous and fair. It is important that leaders reflect from time to time on their own behaviours. In the way that they interact with each team member and how important the little things can be, such as:

- Using basic courtesies such as saying please and thank you.
- Respecting other people's time commitments when seeking help or wanting to discuss something with them.
- Turning up to all meetings on time.
- Turning off mobile phones when in meetings.
- Paying attention to other people when they are speaking.
- Not criticising people's performance or behaviour to other people.

For various reasons meetings are a particular time when respect is often lacking. For example, when people appear disinterested in what is being discussed, when they leave the meeting to deal with telephone calls or when they read emails (and even answer them!) during the meeting. Leaders should set clear standards of behaviour in meetings, so that everyone is given the respect that they deserve, and in particular they should set the right example by not behaving inappropriately themselves.

Respect is an attitude of mind. Leaders need to recognise its importance and then ensure that they behave appropriately at all times. Thereby, creating the culture for everyone to embrace.

### **Challenges**

How much do you really care about how people are treated?

To what extent do you really listen to other people's views and opinions?

How well do you behave in meetings?

What sort of example are you setting to your team by your own behaviour?

## 6 COMMUNICATE OPENLY AND EFFECTIVELY

### *Inadequate communication will be replaced by rumour*

One sure way that a leader will become more trustworthy is to communicate openly, honestly, quickly and widely. Sadly, there are too many stories of business and other leaders failing the trust test, because their teams do not believe that they are being kept fully informed. On occasions, leaders are actually being economical with the truth, but at other times the lack of trust is simply down to perception, as people believe that they are being misled or not being told the full story.

It is a simple truth, that treating people as responsible, committed members of the team and by sharing information with them will lead to a more open, honest and inclusive working environment. The simplest way, and one of the best way, and one of the best ways to motivate others is to share information.

By their own example, leaders need to encourage people to keep others up to date and to give early warnings of potential or actual problems. Too many issues and potential problems are hidden for too long, making it more difficult, if not impossible to resolve them. By setting an example of open communication, people will be encouraged and incentivised to follow their lead and a culture of openness and honesty will ensue.

Where leaders fail to encourage a culture of good communication, they are likely to find themselves leading a team that embraces a culture of secrecy; where information is used as power, where rumours abound and where small groups develop which exclude others. Their team will become characterised by a lack of trust, lower morale, lack of commitment, conflict, poor performance and cynicism.

Open and effective communication begins with the leader sharing information about him/herself. What he/she stands for, what he/she plans to do and what he/she expects from other team members.

Leaders must have a vision and must communicate it often, widely and personally. That vision provides a direction for others to follow and so clearly if it is not shared openly and completely, then the team will be confused and so less effective.

Leaders should also set out clearly their expectations of others. It is not appropriate to point out after the event that things were not done to the standards expected, if those standards were never communicated in the first place.

People expect their leaders to be consistent and not to keep changing their messages. It may be necessary for leaders to communicate the same message more than once in order for it be believed and understood.

The timing of communications can have a significant effect on people's perceptions about what they are being told and not told. If people have not heard from their leaders for a while, they may begin to wonder whether information is being hidden from them, and so it is important to create and manage people's expectations about when information will be shared.

A communication trap that some leaders fall into, is to try to make things sound better than they really are. Distorting, or spinning the truth in this way is likely to be counter-productive, as typically the truth will come out in time and so any short-term benefit from the 'good' news will soon disappear, and the trust in the leader will quickly evaporate. People are often smarter than their leaders think and will quickly see through 'spin'. Leaders should always be honest and transparent in their communications, so that people trust that they are being told the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and are not being manipulated. A minor untruth often leads people to think that nothing else can be fully believed and trusted.

While it is important that leaders communicate a consistent message on a timely basis to everyone, they should be aware of the dangers of communicating their message through different people. It is easy for the impact of one person's message to be diluted when communicated through others.

Open communication is about inclusivity, honesty and integrity. Effective communication is about the way in which information is communicated. In this respect it is important that information is communicated clearly, with no room for misinterpretation. Words matter. It is easy for a leader to use words and expressions that are clear to him/her, but which may be misunderstood or misinterpreted by others. Great intentions can be undermined by ill-chosen words, as many business leaders and politicians will regretfully confirm.

All communications should be clear and concise; less is often more, and simple language should be used wherever possible. Leaders need to ensure that their key messages are not lost by their use of too many words. Clarity of communication helps to win over both hearts and minds.

Open communication which is honest and straightforward does have to be tempered by tact, care and judgement. When communicating bad news, it is important that emotions do not get in the way of the message. Communicating when frustrated, angry, upset or even just very busy, is likely to go badly and sends out the wrong message to all other team members.

It is important for leaders to control their own emotions, as it will allow them to convey the message they want in a calm manner. By demonstrating their own emotional intelligence, a leader's example will help others to appreciate the importance of thinking carefully before speaking, and to make the most of each and every communication opportunity.

Leaders should also think carefully about the use of different communication mediums, and the potential risks attached to faceless communication channels such as emails and written reports. Face-to-face is typically the most engaging form of communication; it reduces the chance of misunderstanding and allows people to build stronger relationships. Leaders should therefore encourage people to speak to each other, and by their own example, create a culture of open, honest and face-to-face communication.

### **Challenges**

How open are you with communicating information?

How honest are you in your communications?

How much time do you spend talking to your team?

What sort of example are you setting to your team by your own behaviour?

## 7 SEEK OUT AND LISTEN TO THE VIEWS OF OTHERS

### *Everyone is equally important - we just do different things*

It is a foolish leader who believes that he/she knows all the right answers or that he/she has a monopoly on all of the good ideas. Too many leaders spend too much time in their ‘ivory towers’, distanced from the people they are trying to lead, only occasionally appearing to show their face to talk, and sometimes listen to their team. Leaders who behave in this way create a culture of elitism, exclusivity, hierarchy and superiority.

Great leaders focus on developing a culture of openness, honesty and inclusivity; where everyone is seen as being important and where everyone feels part of the success of the team, or feels personally disappointed when the team is not doing very well. Such a culture can only be achieved by the leader setting the right example for the whole team.

This begins with being visible and accessible. Leaders often go to great lengths to tell everyone that their door is always open for anyone to come and talk to them about anything, but the reality is typically very different, as doors are often physically closed or the leader is too busy to spare the time. If leaders offer an ‘open door’ policy, then their behaviours have to be consistent with their words and they must make themselves freely available for people to talk to.

Being visible also means that leaders should take the time to ‘walk the floor’. This means walking around the workplace and taking time to chat to people about how things are going, what they think and to find out what is going on in their world. Done with integrity, it shows that a leader cares about the people in his/her team. Not only does this behaviour set the tone for the whole team, leaders might learn something as well!

By their example, leaders should create a culture that everyone is important and that everyone’s views are valued. Often the best ideas for future success come from team members, not the leaders. In a culture of openness and respect for new ideas and opinions, people will willingly make their views known. There is no need to have a suggestion box stuck on a wall!

It is also worth leaders being prepared to deal with, what might be considered to be, fairly trivial issues raised by their team. Many leaders may feel that this is not a good use of their time, but it is difficult to truly set an example of wanting to hear other people’s views, if

they are going to put restrictions on who they will talk to and about what. If leaders only want to talk to people when they want something, or when it is convenient to them, then it becomes a one-sided relationship. It would be like politicians only going out to talk to their constituents when it is election time! Being genuinely available to talk about anything gives leaders a greater opportunity to find out what people really think and what their concerns are. People are more perceptive than many leaders give them credit for, and so leaders should trust their team to know when it is appropriate to raise an issue with their leader, rather than say a manager or colleague.

In the same way, it is also useful for leaders to attend meetings with different groups of people, to hear what people on the 'front line' really think and what the issues really are. These people often know exactly what needs to be done, but all too often no-one bothers to ask them. Great leaders recognise that many of the best ideas come from people on the 'front line' and make sure that they engage with those people as often as they can.

A really important attribute of great leaders is to recognise that problems are best solved by involving others in the decision-making process. The days have gone when the leader is supposed to know best and tells people what to do and how to do things. Instead, leaders should encourage challenge.

It is also a great idea for leaders to engage with people when they first join the team. It sets the example right from the start that the leader is keen to engage with everyone, and it also allows the leader to tap into any fresh ideas that these people may bring to the team from their previous experiences.

However, it is not enough just being visible and accessible. Leaders must also develop a listening culture, where everyone respects the knowledge and views of everyone else. Listening is a much underrated skill. Too many leaders over-talk and under-listen, believing that people want to hear from them about key issues and future plans, and that the best way to motivate their team is by their speeches. Leaders should seek to set a clear example that it is best if everyone spoke less and listened more.

Most leaders claim that they are good listeners, whereas team members will often raise the criticism that they do not feel listened to by their leaders. If people do not feel that they have been listened to, then to all intents and purposes they have not been. Despite all of the things that leaders have to deal with, when they are interacting with others they need to focus on each person, to listen with eyes and ears, to pick up the spoken and unspoken messages and to understand and respond to what is being said.

A key role of all leaders is to make the most of the potential of the people they lead, and so leaders need to be adept at asking the right questions to the right people. It is sometimes said that the wrong answer to the right question can be more effective than the right answer to the wrong question.

Some leaders feel that if they ask for people's opinions and views, they have to act on them. While leaders should engage with people, listen to and respect their views, they do not have to agree with them. By asking questions and listening to the answers, leaders will gain a better understanding of people's concerns, their ideas and their views. This should influence their thinking, behaviour and strategy. It is likely that they will reach better decisions as a result.

Leaders should be open-minded and objective when listening to the views of others. They should weigh up the alternatives and then decide on what they believe is the best course of action. Having made the decision, a leader should then communicate why that was the chosen course of action, so that people appreciate that they were listened to, that their opinions were given fair consideration, and that the leader made what he/she felt to be the right decision based on all of the information collected. It is ultimately the leader who has to make the decision and not all decisions will be popular with everyone, but provided that people feel that they have had a chance to contribute and have been listened to, they are likely to follow the leader.

Those leaders who do take the time to seek out and listen to the contributions of others, who constantly seek to learn from those around them, will by their positive example, foster an environment that encourages everyone to seek out and to share their ideas, so that stronger relationships throughout the team are developed and that better, more inclusive, decisions are made and then implemented.

### **Challenges**

How much time do you spend informally talking to your team?

How accessible would your team say you are?

How good a listener are you?

How open are you to the ideas of your team?

What sort of example are you setting to your team by your own behaviour?



## 8 POSITIVELY ACKNOWLEDGE PEOPLE'S CONTRIBUTIONS

### *Catch people doing good things and then praise them*

It is a simple fact of life that people tend to respond well to thanks and recognition for their efforts, and so it is essential that leaders acknowledge and recognise people's contributions, their performance and their successes. Great leaders will always give praise where praise is due, and importantly never take credit for the contributions of others.

Most people agree that receiving recognition is one of the most important motivators. Ensuring that people know that they matter and that their efforts are appreciated will increase their self-esteem. If a leader creates a culture of positive recognition, it will lead to a motivated, high performing team.

While leaders should be generous with their praise, if it is to have any real value to people it must be delivered with integrity. To have impact, praise needs to be accurate, sincere, genuine and fair. Offering praise where it is not truly merited, or offering praise to a degree that exceeds what is truly merited, it devalues genuine praise and creates a dishonest environment.

Praise can be given formally in a meeting or informally. Informal recognition, a quiet word with someone in private linked to the delivery of the performance or success, should be offered quickly and often. Formal recognition, public statements of praise, should be offered when appropriate, but within a reasonable timescale.

The informal, face-to-face interactions are often the most important ones, as they are natural and perhaps more heartfelt, particularly where the leader has made a personal effort to seek out the other person to pass on their thanks. These informal interactions allow real leadership skills to be seen, as it shows the human and caring side of the leader.

Through the leader's example of giving honest and sincere appreciation to members of their team, others will begin to replicate those same behaviours. Recognising the benefits that they derive from receiving praise, people will begin to offer positive recognition to others, so that they can embrace the positive benefits to the team's performance through improved motivation.

Giving praise where praise is deserved and not taking the credit for the efforts and successes of others, requires leaders to show humility. Leaders who behave with integrity, also show humility. They recognise that the success of any team depends on all of the people in the team, and they appreciate how much they personally depend on the contributions of others. Their primary concern is for the success of the team, not their personal achievements, and they delight in praising the performance of others while never taking the credit for other people's ideas or successes.

And as a final thought, leaders should look for opportunities each and every day to say 'thank you' to their team for their efforts.

### **Challenges**

How often do you praise individual performance in your team?

How generous are you with your praise?

Would your team agree?

Do all members of your team feel that you are fair and consistent with your praise?

What sort of example are you setting to your team by your own behaviour?

## 9 BE PERSONALLY EFFECTIVE

### *Prioritise, plan and perform*

It is important to the success of any team that the leader has a clear understanding of his/her priorities and that he/she acts on those priorities. It is generally accepted that effective people focus on doing the right things, and so it is important that leaders do not get drawn into carrying out tasks that are the responsibility of others.

Often when people talk about being personally effective they talk about time management, but of course time cannot be managed. No-one can save time to use it later or slow it down. All that anyone can do is make the best use of the time they have available. Leaders will undoubtedly have many calls and demands on their time and will not be able to fulfil them all, so it is critical to the success of the whole team that they are highly effective in the way that they manage their workloads.

It may sound like a statement of the obvious, but the first stage of being personally effective is simply to recognise that time is precious and must be used wisely. Leaders' prime responsibility is to lead. If they are too busy performing other tasks then they cannot adequately fulfil their leadership role, which means that it is incumbent on all leaders to understand exactly what their role is, and from that understanding, develop their personal priorities and goals.

Leaders have to let go of certain tasks and responsibilities and must not be involved in everything. If leaders interfere in areas that are the responsibility of others they will create confusion, and by their actions and behaviours, cause others to behave in a similar way. Encouraging everyone to understand and focus on their own priorities is the best way to create an effective team.

Having a plan will help ensure that priorities and goals are achieved. Leaders should build their plans around their main priorities, while recognising that the most important things should be done when they are most likely to perform at their best. During a day, people's mental and physical ability to perform tasks changes and so leaders, along with all of their team, should take time to understand how their capabilities change during a day and then ensure that their 'best' time is not wasted on trivial activities. This is particularly important when leaders need to be creative and when important decisions need to be made.

A challenge for leaders and team members is to avoid being drawn into doing tasks because they are deadline driven. When the primary focus is on urgency, individuals and teams

lose their effectiveness. To lead an effective team requires that each member of the team understands their individual responsibilities and that they focus on things that are important.

Leaders need to set an example to their team that being busy is not the same as being effective. Being busy is a common failing of leaders who have a lot to do, but it can quickly become a trait that is followed by others in the team who want to be seen as committed and working hard for the team. Effective people are those who calmly go about their work in an organised way and who continually achieve their goals. Busy people on the other hand are often disorganised, emotional, stressed and regularly fail to achieve their goals.

Busy leaders who become disorganised and personally ineffective, often fall into the trap of delegating their ineffectiveness to the rest of their team. As they are apparently overloaded with work, they see the easy way to deal with it all as offloading it to their team, which means that other team members become too busy and cannot achieve their own goals. Not only does the leader's behaviour create team ineffectiveness and frustration, the disorganised leader will quickly lose the respect of his/her team.

On the other hand, organised and effective leaders are more able to understand the consequences of developments and new tasks and so respond appropriately. They are in a better position to challenge deadlines, change the scope of work and/or recognise and communicate when it is clear that something cannot be done. Personally effective leaders are committed to delivering high quality work on time, and so by their example, show the rest of the team how that can be achieved.

Leaders who accept work without thinking of the consequences are likely to end up being too busy themselves, or with their team being overstretched, which may result in missing deadlines or failing to produce work of the right quality. Leaders need to encourage people to focus on their priorities and to set an example of not saying 'yes' to too many things.

In the same way that being busy can be ineffective, so can working long hours. Most people appreciate the importance of rest and relaxation if they are to perform at their best, whether they are a leader or a team member. The example set by the leader is important in this regard. A leader who tells his/her team to go home on time but stays late themselves, or who tells his/her team to take a break for lunch but then never stops themselves, sends out a confusing message to the team as to what is expected of them. Again, a leader's actions and words must be consistent if they are to positively influence behaviour.

Being personally effective also means setting and agreeing standards of performance. Perfection is rarely achievable and aiming for it often causes people to waste valuable time.

A leader's role is to encourage people to set and communicate clear standards of excellence, not perfection, which are achievable in the available time.

Being personally effective also involves being able to delegate effectively. All leaders must ensure that they focus their time and energies on the things that they should be doing, and that they make the most of the skills of the rest of their team. Poor leaders are often guilty of either failing to delegate or of delegating inappropriately, which sends out the wrong messages to the rest of the team about the importance of delegation.

Being effective may also mean being flexible and creative. Leaders should, by their own actions, be open to new ways in which things can be done differently and better.

Effective leaders respond to when things are not going well or as well as was hoped. They are willing and able to change direction in order to achieve the ultimate objective. They are not rigid in their approach and realise that there may be better ways to deal with something. Being open to change and accepting that there are often many ways to achieve the same end goal, are attributes that all leaders should have and should encourage in their teams. A team whose mantra is along the lines of 'that's' the way we have always done it is likely to become an ineffective team.

Being personally effective means not putting things off just because they are unpleasant or difficult to deal with. It is a common trait in many people to put these things off because they would rather focus on other more pleasant or easier tasks. Deferring those tasks that really need dealing with may cause personal ineffectiveness. The worry of knowing that there are unpleasant or difficult things that need doing, may cause a lack of focus when working on other tasks. The unpleasant or difficult things may be important priorities which will not be achieved if they are postponed. Putting off addressing these tasks may mean that they become harder and more time-consuming to deal with in the future.

A leader is certain to have to deal with many difficult situations, but each situation is an opportunity for the leader to set an example to everyone else, that difficult situations are best dealt with promptly to avoid any of the possible negative consequences.

One of the ways that strong leaders set themselves apart from others is the way that they deal with crises. Crises will happen and typically when they do happen, people panic. When people panic they stop thinking clearly. What is needed in a crisis is clarity and composure, and it is up to the leader to set the example.

A crisis is often a difficult or worrying time. By definition it is a decisive moment or a time when something that is important for the future happens. At such a time, important

decisions need to be made and they can only be made by those who are in control of their emotions, and who have the time to think through the issues before making a decision. It is vital that leaders set the right example by remaining calm, even if all around them things seem to be falling apart, keeping a clear head, remaining focused on what is important and clearly identifying what can and should be done to move forward. The leader's actions, not words, are crucial at this time. A leader who rushes around telling everyone not to worry or panic is most likely to cause more panic and worry! Dealing with a crisis in a calm, assured manner will encourage others to follow that example and will most likely lead to the best possible decisions being made.

One of the most important traits of highly effective leaders is their ability to 'helicopter'. This involves taking time out from what is being done at a particular point in time to reflect on how things have gone so far (looking behind you), what new information is now available and what issues there are that need to be considered (looking around you), and what now needs to be done to achieve the objectives (looking ahead). Through this process of 'rising above' the task, leaders can ensure that they remain focused on achieving what is important. If leaders lose sight of what is important and how things are changing and developing, they become reactive rather than proactive and so more disorganised. Taking time to reflect and consider the consequences allows a leader to take control of situations, and avoid becoming a victim of circumstances. This attribute of taking time out to reflect and 'helicopter' is a positive behaviour that should be encouraged in all team members to help develop a more effective team.

### **Challenges**

How well do you focus on what is important rather than what is urgent?

Are you clear about what your priorities are?

How good are you at delegating?

How effective are you at dealing with crises?

How often do you take time to pause and reflect on what has happened so far (helicopter)?

What sort of example are you setting to your team by your own behaviour?

# 10 BE POSITIVE AND ENTHUSIASTIC

## *Enthusiasm is contagious*

People thrive in positive working environments where the focus is on what can be done in the future, rather than on what went wrong in the past.

Leaders need to have a positive outlook and belief in what can be achieved. They should focus their energies on what can be done rather than on what cannot, and they should look to take action rather than spend too long in detailed analysis of what happened in the past. Leaders must believe in themselves, in the people they lead and in what they are trying to do. Those leaders that believe in success normally succeed, while those who believe in the possibility of failure, normally fail.

Creating a positive environment begins with the leader and in particular with the leader's attitude to the team's vision. The vision should be clear, motivational and should provide an identity for the team. Leaders should have a real passion for the team's vision and should advocate it strongly at every opportunity, to bring it alive and make it happen. If the leader does not enthuse about the vision then why should anyone else? Without commitment to the vision, it just becomes, what many critics say about vision statements, just a set of fancy marketing words.

Great leaders are passionate about what they do and convey that passion and enjoyment to the rest of their team. Without passion, leaders will find it difficult to motivate their team. That passion is evidenced by the way that leaders go about their work, particularly their positive body language, upbeat communication and use of positive language. Leaders need to think carefully about the way that they present themselves to their team and the words that they use. It is important to use strong, positive words wherever possible, provided of course that they are said with integrity. Saying 'I am sure we can' rather than 'I think we might be able to' shows a greater belief in what a team can do. It is important to enthuse about people's success and so saying something has been done 'very well' rather than 'quite well' is much more motivational. When leaders set a positive example in the way that they take genuine delight in people's successes, it makes a real difference to the team's attitudes and behaviours and it quickly energises, or re-energises the whole team.

Teams will face setbacks and failures. Leaders need to be positive in the way that they respond and to focus on what can be learned rather than whose fault it was. Only by the

leader's example will the team be encouraged to remain positive and to focus on the future in response to these difficult situations.

Teams will inevitably have to face and deal with new challenges. One way of facing such challenges is to see them in a negative light, as a hurdle to overcome, distracting the team from what they have become good at and comfortable with. Positive leaders create a culture that challenges are there to be embraced, as they offer new opportunities for the team to learn, to develop and excel. The leader's positive attitude to facing challenges and problems should set the tone for the whole team.

Great leaders should also be optimistic. Few pessimists are real leaders even though they may have the title. Great leaders are committed to the future, and so any pessimism or negativity in what the future holds will undoubtedly be felt by their team.

As has already been advocated in earlier chapters, all leadership actions and behaviours must be carried out with absolute integrity and so when leaders are genuinely enthusiastic, positive, energetic and confident, they will be able to harness the energy that is already within their team to achieve success.

### **Challenges**

Do you enjoy your job?

Do you have a positive attitude to setbacks and challenges?

Do you openly show genuine delight in success?

What sort of example are you setting to your team by your own behaviour?



# 11 PROVIDE SUPPORT, ENCOURAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION

## *When people leave an organisation, an investment has been lost*

Most leaders acknowledge that people are an organisation's most important asset. The challenge for all leaders, however, is whether their behaviours and attitudes towards their team reflects that belief.

A fundamental leadership trait is to have a genuine interest in people and their well-being. Leaders should want the best for people and have a real desire to get the best out of them.

Leaders should set an example that it is important for everyone to help other people realise their full potential. A leader's example should result in others behaving in a more positive way towards their colleagues.

In business, people should be treated as assets not costs. Assets help generate income and profits and so they are looked after and subject to ongoing investment. Costs, on the other hand, reduce profits and so should be kept to a minimum. Believing that people are assets means recognising how important they are to an organisation's success, and therefore how important it is to look after them and invest in them.

One major form of investment in people is to provide training and development opportunities to help them develop their skills and behaviours, so that they can contribute even more to a team's success. However, having invested resources to develop people's skills, it is vital that they are given the opportunity and support to actually put those new skills to good use. Failure to do so means that not only would the training have been a waste of resources, it would also send out confusing and inconsistent messages to the team as to whether the leader was really concerned with their development.

Leaders should carefully reflect on the level of personal support that they offer to people in their team. They should challenge themselves by asking questions such as:

- How available am I really for people to talk to me and seek my advice and encouragement?
- Do I really have an open door policy where I welcome people or is the policy little more than a platitude?
- Am I readily available to give people the support they need, when they need it?

However, being available and having a genuine 'open door' is one thing, but is it enough? The potential problem is that it puts the onus onto other people to make the effort to go and see their leader wherever he/she may be. Some people may be put off doing so because they do not want to bother their leader with what they feel may be a relatively trivial matter, while others may be concerned about interrupting their leader at a busy time. Therefore, leaders need to make themselves more accessible to people within their team and make the effort to go to where their team are, and not wait for their team to visit them. Leaders should visit different parts of the organisation, meet people, and not just the favoured few, taking time to find out how people are getting on, how they are feeling and offering words of encouragement and advice. Leaders should never underestimate the importance of personal visits to motivate people, and they should make sure that everyone knows that they matter and that their contribution is important.

The better that a leader understands the people within his/her team, the more effective he/she will be in motivating individual team members. Getting close to people and treating them as individuals can have a significant effect on their performance and behaviours. To effectively motivate others involves finding out what people want, and do not want from their job. So it involves spending time talking with them and listening to them, not just once but often as motivators are likely to change. Typical motivators concern rewards, recognition, challenging and interesting work, and being part of a motivated team. Once a leader finds out what will improve a person's motivation, then he/she can do something about it.

For some people, it is important that they are openly acknowledged by their leader. For others, just to know that the leader is there and willing to support and stand by them, is encouragement enough. In whatever way leaders offer support, their focus should be to provide a positive example to promote a culture of mutual support within their team.

The emphasis is on support. Leaders should try to avoid telling people what to do or how to do it and so avoid creating a subordinate relationship. Leaders should encourage their team to think issues through for themselves, but make it clear that they have their leader's support. They should accentuate the positive and encourage people to think along the

lines of what can or should be done, rather than on what cannot or should not be done. Leaders should make it clear that their team have nothing to fear because fear encourages people to behave passively, to hide mistakes, to blame others and so discourages openness and honesty. The increased levels of motivation and self-esteem felt by people who have successfully completed tasks and projects based on their own initiative, rather than carrying out someone else's instructions is highly significant.

When things go wrong, and on occasions they probably will, then leaders need to openly support the people concerned. They must have the courage to stand up for each person in their team, to support them when they make mistakes and show real loyalty to them.

When mistakes are made, it is important to remember that they are rarely made deliberately and so leaders need to recognise the efforts that people have made, and then support them in finding a way to deal with the situation. Blame is unnecessary as nothing can change what has happened. All that matters is the future. Leaders should therefore focus on restoring people's self confidence, so that they can learn from their mistakes and should try to view any related cost as an investment in that person's development. A leader should not waste that investment by showing a lack of support in difficult times.

To illustrate the point, consider this story about a company that lost one million dollars because of a mistake that was made by a senior employee. Everyone expected the employee to be dismissed when he was called in to see the CEO, and so they were astonished when the employee came out of the meeting happily announcing that he was still on the payroll. When the CEO was asked why the employee had not been dismissed, given that his mistake had cost the company one million dollars, the CEO, showing courageous leadership stated 'Why should I dismiss him, we have just invested one million dollars in his education. He won't make that mistake again!'

Leaders should also create a culture that criticism is counter-productive and should never be used to motivate or change people's behaviour. Apart from the fact that criticism is backward looking as it focuses on what went wrong, criticism often causes people to try to justify their actions and condemn the critical person in return. Instead, leaders should encourage a culture of giving feedback which, when done properly, focuses on what can be done better in the future.

Making the most of people's skills and talents is best done by focusing on their strengths rather than their weaknesses. Leaders should encourage people to use their skills to their best advantage, as it is much easier to build on a strength rather than try to overcome a weakness.

Leaders should also create an environment where successes are not only recognised, but also celebrated. Celebrations energise people and organisations. Spending money on ‘celebrations’, whatever form they may take, should be seen as an investment not a cost. Provided the celebration is done well, it should be seen as a worthwhile investment. To add real value to celebrations, it is best if they take place in ‘work time’ rather than in the personal time of your team. Setting aside part of the working day to celebrate success sends out a very positive message, that an organisation really values people and is investing in them. The event is likely to be well attended, and should be more successful than one which places further burdens on people’s precious personal and family time.

It is also important that leaders always attend all celebrations. It sets an example that these ‘get-togethers’ matter. Too often leaders do not turn up because they are too busy, they are not comfortable in that sort of social setting or even because they believe the team would enjoy the event more if they weren’t there! Leaders should be there, be available and talk to as many people as they can, and not just the same people that they normally talk to.

### **Challenges**

Do you treat people as assets or costs?

How visible and accessible are you to everyone in your team?

How supportive are you when things go wrong?

Do you encourage the celebration of successes?

What sort of example are you setting to your team by your own behaviour?

## 12 TAKE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIOUSLY

### *Curiosity and eagerness to learn are important human traits*

Learning and leadership go together and so a personal goal for all leaders should be in relation to their own learning and self-development. In the same way that leaders should help other people develop and make the most of their talents, so they need to recognise the importance of continuous learning for themselves. This will help gain fresh knowledge, acquire or develop their skills and adapt their behaviours. By their own example, leaders need to create an environment in which people are encouraged and prepared to learn and improve.

The quality of any leader is reflected in the way that they behave and the standards that they set for themselves. To ask others to take learning seriously requires the leader to show real commitment to their own personal development.

For the open-minded, there is a clear understanding that we never stop learning. Just because a person has reached the heights of being a leader does not mean that he/she knows it all – far from it. Leaders should never think that they are so special that they can stop investing time in their own personal development.

Leaders, as much as anyone, need to keep moving forward with the times, responding to changing circumstances and new challenges as they arise. It is all too easy for leaders to become fixed in their ideas about what has worked for them and/or their team in the past, and so fail to meet the new demands and challenges that will need to be faced.

To earn the respect and trust of team members means that leaders need to retain, and even improve their relevant technical competencies, personal and leadership skills. To be effective, leaders need to embrace learning and show a real commitment to it for their own benefit and for the benefit of those that they purport to lead.

At one level, simply taking part in any learning and development programme sets the right example to a leader's team. It sends out a clear message that everyone has something to learn and that they should find the time to invest in their own personal development. Leaders should never be the ones who fail to participate in these programmes.

Leaders should positively and demonstrably participate in each element of the programme; highlighting the benefits of being involved and not allowing themselves to be distracted by work-related interruptions. It is not fair or reasonable to expect others to prioritise learning, if a leader fails to do so.


Leaders should also read widely and encourage others to do the same, to deepen and broaden their knowledge. Investing time in such reading sets an example to others of the importance of learning from experts in their field, from the experiences of other leaders and about how different organisations operate.

Leaders also need to set a clear and positive, personal example about learning from experience. This means setting aside time for personal reflection and asking the key questions; “what went well?” and “what could be done better next time?”. Only when leaders embrace this aspect of learning, not only by doing it but also by demonstrating the benefits, can others justifiably be encouraged to follow their example.


A culture of giving and receiving feedback, openly and honestly, is a sure way of developing the strength of team members. Only in this way can people truly understand how they are perceived and how their behaviours affect other people. With this winformation, people

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can look to build on their positive skills and behaviours, and to improve where they might have weaknesses. Implementing a feedback culture should begin with the leader being open to receive and act upon feedback from his/her colleagues. Only if leaders are willing to embrace learning through feedback, can they realistically expect others to do the same.

If a leader genuinely believes in the importance of everyone in their team developing their skills to make the most of their talents and to fulfil their ambitions, then a leader's actions need to be consistent with his/her beliefs and words.

### **Challenges**

How committed are you to your own learning and development?

Do you have a personal development plan that you are actively and demonstrably working towards achieving?

What sort of example are you setting to your team by your own behaviour?

You are welcome to find out more about this eBook's author Peter Thatcher, and the consultancy Aptus Personal Development Consultants by simply clicking here: [www.aptuspdc.co.uk](http://www.aptuspdc.co.uk)