

How To Become A Leader

("The Management Bible")



It's A Fact

Do you know why geese fly in that characteristic V-formation, honking their way over thousands of kilometres to a warmer destination? Consider these fascinating observations – which can have meaning for perceptive leaders:

- Leadership upfront is rotated. When the lead goose gets tired, it swaps the point position with a goose in the V-formation.
- By flying as a team, the geese help each other by creating an upward air current for one another. Each flap of the wings literally creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. In fact, someone has estimated that by helping each other in this way, the flock gets 71 percent greater flying range than if each goose flew on its own.
- When one goose becomes exhausted or gets wounded, two fall out of formation with it and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with the straggler until it is able to fly again.
- The geese at the rear of the formation are the ones who do the honking. Perhaps they're announcing to the leaders up front that they're following and all is well. Certainly the repeated honks encourage those upfront to hang in there till the destination is reached.

It's fascinating the things leaders can learn from geese.

Leadership is not an exclusive club for those who are 'born with it'. Although leadership relies on some inherited characteristics, it also depends on training and experience. Indeed, many of the traits and abilities that are the raw materials of leadership can be acquired. If you link those traits with an essential desire to achieve, nothing can keep you from becoming a leader. You may even become a great leader. This ten point program will get you started....

1 – Believe that you can become a leader.

Leadership is a function; it is something that a person does, a set of skills – and any skill can be learned, strengthened, and enhanced. Not all leaders are 'born leaders'; and leadership is certainly not just a group of personality traits. The leader lives within each of us. So acknowledge that leadership begins with your own belief in yourself.

2 – Be sure you have a burning desire to lead.

Are you 'fired-up' and enthusiastic enough to get something done?

Leaders must have a desire to serve, to achieve a goal, and to leave things better than they were when they found them. Remember, leaders need causes and causes need leaders. So make sure you have a clear sense of mission, a focus, a band-wagon to leap on – and a passion to achieve.

3 – Study the qualities of recognised leaders.

What distinguishes leaders from others in the group or organisation? Interview, observe, read about and study leaders you admire. Buy or borrow biographies of leaders you respect; and explore what makes them exemplars of the art of leadership.

4 – Be clear about what leadership entails.

Know what it means to lead. According to Kouzes & Posner you must be able to:

- *Challenge the status quo*: seek out challenging opportunities to change, grow, innovate, improve, experiment, and take risks.
- *Inspire a shared vision*: envisage an uplifting and ennobling future; enlist others to share the vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes, and dreams.
- *Empower others to act*: foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust; strengthen people by giving power away, providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support.
- *Model the way*: set an example by behaving in ways consistent with shared values; achieve small wins that promote consistent progress; build commitment.
- *Encourage the heart*: recognise individual contributions; celebrate team accomplishments regularly.



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Viewpoint

"I demonstrate the art of leadership with a simple piece of string placed on a table. Pull the string, and it will follow wherever you wish. Push it and it will go nowhere at all. It's just that way when it comes to leading people."

- Dwight D. Eisenhower



Quotable Quote

Each one of us, in large or small ways, is a leader. Some have an official title for their roles as leaders, while others may lead their brothers, sisters, or friends. Leadership is a state of mind – what you do to yourself, not what you do to others.



Viewpoint

"Leaders will be those who empower others.... Empowering leadership means bringing out the energy and capabilities people have and getting them to work together in a way they wouldn't do otherwise."

- Bill gates in *Entrepreneur*



Quotable Quote

A manager can make a good team work well. A good manager can make an average team work well. A true leader can change the whole attitude, philosophy, and spirit of any group of people.

5 – Learn to lead by leading.

The more opportunities you have to serve in leadership roles, the more likely it is that you'll develop the skills to lead. Warren Bennis writes that 'effective leaders learn by leading' – and they learn from failures as well as from successes.

6 – Volunteer for leadership roles.

Find ways to broaden your base of leadership experience by looking beyond your workplace. Remember that there are many opportunities to develop, practise, and sharpen your leadership skills and talents, for example:

- Volunteer for leadership roles in community groups and professional associations. Such organisations always need good people and they provide broad avenues to learn leading skills.
- Seek tougher assignments. They usually involve greater risk, but have a greater pay-off in terms of your leadership development (and promotional prospects).

7 – Learn from your experiences.

Take time to reflect on what you've learned from life's successes and failures. Think back over one of your leadership episodes; review the experience by asking:

- Where and when did the episode take place? Who was involved? Who initiated it? Why did I get involved? How did I challenge myself and others?

- What did I hope to achieve? How did I generate enthusiasm in others?
- How did I involve others? How did I encourage collaboration? How did I foster trust and respect?
- What principles and values guided me and others? How did I set an example? What strategies and structures did I apply? How did I progress from one milestone to the next?
- How did I acknowledge the work of others? How did we celebrate success?
- What lessons did I learn from that experience about myself and about leadership?

8 – Study yourself.

What are your strong and weak points? What should you be doing to strengthen the former and eliminate the latter? Ask for feedback from people you know. Make your own list of developmental needs – in public speaking, understanding the change process, handling people, motivating others, and so on.

9 – Learn as much as you can about group action.

Make sure you understand the dynamics of your group. We no longer motivate our teams with a whip; we give them a dream and help them reach it – *that's* leadership.

10 – Develop a plan of learning.

Effective leaders are constantly learning. Devise a plan to improve your leadership, including formal study, and work to your plan. Leadership is a capacity that doesn't just happen for most people. It needs to be worked at.

