



LEADERSHIP: FIVE CRITICAL CAPABILITIES

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Everything in business begins and ends with leadership. And because it's a complex topic, no one expert has a complete formula for what makes a better leader.

Therefore, here are five important bodies of knowledge for those who are trying to sharpen their leadership skills. All have been developed by true students and teachers of leadership. Master these lessons and you'll be far more effective.

In a future column I'll look at a similar set of skills and attributes of effective management. Though leadership and management are related, they are different sides of the same coin – and a person tends to be stronger in one vs. the other.

TRUST AND TEAM HEALTH

Pat Lencioni, author of the classic **Five Dysfunctions of a Team** and his latest **The Advantage**, emphasizes the importance of team health. There are plenty of smart teams that have failed; in turn, a healthy team free of politics and confusion will discern the right decisions and be able to align and execute on a common vision.

Lencioni outlines five dysfunctions that damage team health, each impacting the others in a cascade of challenges:

The key is identifying your primary leadership dysfunction and focusing on correcting it.

- **Absence of Trust**—unwilling to be vulnerable within the group
- **Fear of Conflict**—seeking harmony over constructive and passionate debate
- **Lack of Commitment**—feigning buy-in for group decisions, resulting in no aligned direction
- **Avoidance of Accountability**—failing to hold people (and each other) accountable to a high standard of performance
- **Inattention to Results**— more interested in status than outcomes

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FIVE PRACTICES

Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, based on research involving more than 3 million employees and leaders, have identified five practices that are common among effective leaders as outlined in their bestseller **The Leadership Challenge** (5th Edition out this summer). The specific practices:

- **Model the Way.** More is “caught” than taught, so know your values and live them through your actions
- **Inspire a Shared Vision.** Develop and communicate a vivid picture of what is possible.
- **Challenge the Process.** Encourage continuous improvement and learn from mistakes.
- **Enable Others to Act.** Foster trust and collaboration, making it possible for others to do great work.
- **Encourage the Heart.** Recognize contributions and celebrate values and victories in a spirit of community.

Again, the key is picking one of the five practices on which to focus and improve.

And when you're surrounded by "A" players, your job of leading is many times easier.

HIRING "A" PLAYERS

Brad Smart, author of **Topgrading** (3rd Edition 2012), has been teaching top leaders a hiring and promotion approach that guarantees 90% of your team will be high performers. And when you're surrounded by "A" players, your job of leading is many times easier.

Smart's approach has several unique components:

- 1) **Scorecard:** This replaces the standard job description and outlines cultural attributes and results.
- 2) **Screening Interview:** Five specific questions that accurately determine whether a candidate should be invited in for a lengthier interview.
- 3) **CIDS Interview:** A multi-hour in-depth interview that helps discern patterns of past performance and behavior.
- 4) **TORC:** a technique for garnering useful information from a candidate prior to calling their references
- 5) **Virtual Bench:** A proactive approach to making sure you have sufficient "A" player candidates for potential jobs

It's an intense process mastered by firms like GE and thousands of growth firms, but a few hours spent wisely upfront will save a leader thousands of hours of drama.

HIGH STAKES NEGOTIATIONS

Dr. Victoria Medvec, Kellogg School of Management professor and author of the online learning program entitled High Stakes Negotiations, helps a leader maximize success in a complex negotiation while strengthening the relationship.

Dr. Medvec suggests ten strategies, a few which include:

Learn how to win while strengthening the relationship.

- 1) **Name Price/Terms First** – puts the other party in a position of countering the offer.
- 2) **Seek Synchronicity** – avoid negotiating and communicating via email except as a confirmation tool. Aim for direct conversations throughout the process.
- 3) **Fragment Issues** – fight the tendency to simplify the negotiations. Instead, fragment into as many sub-issues as possible so you can play with the variables.
- 4) **Generate Multiple Proposals** – always bring multiple options to the table and vary across the proposals your strength to bring attention to it.
- 5) **Anchor Outcomes** – push the edges with your offers to move the center closer to your desired outcome. Plus it allows you to concede some ground which strengthens the relationship

Most leaders spend a great deal of time negotiating with someone they will eventually have to work with for quite some time, whether it's with a customer, supplier, employee, investor, etc. Learn how to win while strengthening the relationship.

PEER COACHING

Marshall Goldsmith, famous business coach and author of **What Got You Here Won't Get You There**, emphasizes the necessity of every leader having a peer coach – someone that can hold a leader accountable, daily, to the behaviors and activities that need changed or improved.

He suggests a specific multistep process:

- 1) **Gather Feedback** – survey colleagues and gather feedback on areas of improvement based on the frameworks above
- 2) **Identify Behaviors** – decide on two or three behaviors that need changed

- 3) **Apologize and Advertise** – make public the behaviors you're changing and apologize to those that have been previously harmed by your bad behavior
- 4) **Listen and Thank** – continue to garner input and thank those that provide you constructive feedback
- 5) **Follow-up and Feed-Forward** – with your peer coach report daily your progress

In summary, outstanding leaders master the skills of hiring and negotiations. In leading others they strive to build a healthy team atmosphere and enable the five fundamental practices of leadership. And to continually improve their capabilities a leader teams up with a peer coach that provides daily feedback and accountability.