

Notes for Emerging Leaders

A Collaboration of Management Thinking

Discussion Document
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1. Leadership Principles

There have been volumes written on the most important characteristics of good leaders. There for what's written here is the **Top 10 Leadership Techniques** I'd suggest any emerging leader to adopt. A leader with a core set of techniques and habits is very powerful and surprisingly rare except at the higher levels of management. These are the 10 that work for me, take them, use them and then change those that don't work for you thereby creating your own management style.

1.1. Maintain a Principled Approach

Principles are defined as truths unaffected by when they are applied. Using a 'principled approach' to leadership means that those you are working with can easily agree to the principle you put forward. Once a principle is accepted all that remains is the mutual agreement of how to deliver on the principle.

For example, most people in business would agree that "as a principle" managers need to provide a weekly report. Once it's agreed that yes, managers need to provide a weekly report, exactly how that report is provided can be discussed. Most conflict occurs around 'how' something should be done; how long should the report be? How should it be sent? Etc. But with the principle agreed no one will argue the need for a report. It's just 'how' the report should be done.

The opposite to a 'principled approach' is the 'positional stance' and once you take up a position it's hard to get out of it without losing face, even when the other persons position starts to look better to you! Taking means more rapid agreement and allows you to quickly move on to finding how best to deliver the work.

1.2. Employ Active Listening

Many people hear the words others are saying and appear to listen yet never really grasp the true meaning of what is being said. This is passive listening and isn't much use for leaders except in the most casual of conversations. As conversations in business have meant to deliver intent, not just entertainment, a leader needs to be practicing Active Listening.

Active Listening is the practice of not only hearing the words but understanding their meaning, in the context of what the speaker is referring to. Not only that, but in the context of the 'wider picture'. When practicing Active Listening a leader is considering how *what they are hearing* has a connection to other information they have.

For example, an investor is complaining about the rate of return on their investment. With active listening the leader will not only hear the complaint but understand why it is a complaint, and possibly what the investor would want to have as a remedy to the poor return.

1.3. Consider the Wider Picture

A leader is involved with making the business a success and so cannot take an isolated and restricted view of their activities and areas of involvement. Every leader must consider how *what they do* affects the business as a whole.

Take the example above, when the investor complains about a poor return the investment manager might pressure staff to invest more wisely. A leader considering the wider picture, the fuller more complete situation, will not only ask if the investment staff should invest more wisely but also consider what is affecting their investments. Is the market saturated so reducing investment value? Do the team have the most up to date information?

Considering the wider picture will ensure the leader is crossing team and discipline boundaries and so making the success of their team and the business more likely.

1.4. Make Informed Decisions

Make decisions based on sufficient information will help ensure the decision is more likely to be the correct one. Leaders know that there needs to be an *appropriate amount of information gathering and analysis* for each decision but that it must be appropriate.

Efficient leaders consider the wider picture when gathering information and base their decisions on sound principles making them more likely to succeed. Efficient leaders also recognise trends and know when to draw on experience to make efficient and timely decisions.

1.5. Communicate Clearly

Leaders understand that those working for or with them have to have a shared understanding of what they have been communicating about. Whether this is in spoken conversation or written forms such as email the communication must always be kept clear and simple.

While a leader should be comfortable with the vocabulary and terminology of their field of expertise they should be aware of *what they say* and how it will be understood by others. Many people will not have the same vocabulary or understanding of the terminology that the leader does. A leader does not assume this is a failing of the listener but will wisely modify the way they communicate so it is clear and simple for the recipient.

1.6. Clarify and Confirm

A leader who is practicing Active Listening and clear and simple communication will be naturally inclined to ensure both listener and speaker have understood each other. The wise leader will *check for understanding* both of themselves and from who they are communicating with. If you fail to check for understanding it is likely you will both have a different understanding!

Checking for understanding can be achieved by repeating back what has been said, summarising and also rephrasing. To continue the example above we could say “So, just to make sure I have it clear, you feel the investment return is too low and that 5% is more acceptable?” Use the speakers same vocabulary so that it ‘sounds familiar’ then get them *to confirm your understanding* so you can then discuss a solution.

1.7. Act with Speed

Once a decision is made the effective leader acts with speed to deliver on what was agreed. Delaying risks making the decision invalid by the time it’s implemented or lessening the value of it. Also, there is no reason to delay, once you’re agreed you should *make happen what you said would happen*.

Every leader makes many decisions and delays in acting will often result in new issues arising and new decisions being needed before the benefits of previous work have been felt.

1.8. Maintain Integrity

Once the leader has said they will make something happen they must *do what they say they will do* every time. This will demonstrate they have integrity of action, word and intent and so foster trust amongst those they work with or for.

Integrity is also doing what they say they will do *in the time and way* they said they would.

1.9. Recruit and Retain the best people

A highly effective leader achieves their best work through other people and so recruit and retain the best people they can. They recognise that their team have goals and ambitions of their own and to get what they want they find out what the staff want *and give it to them* to achieve maximum motivation.

1.10. Maintain Professional Focus

In hours dedicated to work effective leaders don't get sidetracked by amusing or entertaining activities that are not helping them or the business succeed. They maintain a professional *focus of effort* on the tasks they are working on.

Professional focus also sees the leader striving to learn more about their field of practice and to attain a level of mastery within their profession. The leader knows maintaining their focus is required as it takes around 3 years to get good at something, 10 years to master it and this isn't achieved without commitment.

The wise leader also knows when to take off the work shoes, kick back and enjoy life!

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