

COMPASS POINT NAVIGATOR

Practical Advice That Works

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The top ten ways to improve your leadership skills

by Ronya Banks



"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."

—John F. Kennedy

IF YOU DESIRE TO LEAD a passion-filled life wherein you are a positive influence to everyone, you will enjoy incorporating the following practices to assist you in consistently living your life as a conscious and strong leader.

Have a clear vision of yourself, others and the world. Who are you? What do you stand for? What is your life purpose? How do you want to influence others? How do you want to contribute to yourself, your family, friends, colleagues and the world?

Answer these questions to formulate a concrete vision of yourself and your world. Then, start living your life as the leader who makes your vision a reality!

Know and utilize your strengths and gifts. You have unique gifts that you were born with and personal strengths you've developed over your lifetime. Realizing and utilizing these gifts and strengths will assist you in being a formidable leader.

Live in accordance with your morals and values. Making choices and taking actions out of accordance with your morals and values leaves you with a nagging 'bad' feeling. This feeling seeping in from your subconscious mind hinders your success in your career and your relationships.



On the other hand, making choices and taking actions aligned with your morals and values helps you succeed almost effortlessly.

People sense integrity and will naturally respect your opinion and leadership.

Lead others with inclusiveness and compassion. The greatest leaders are those who include everyone in their sphere of influence by recognizing each person's greatest value. To be one of these leaders, look beyond the obvious and see others with insight and compassion. Many of history's greatest leaders have admitted that they rose to the top because another leader recognized and harnessed their potential.

Set definitive goals and follow concrete action plans. You have to know where your destination is before you can map out a plan to get there. To improve your leadership skills, first set specific life goals with appropriate timelines.

Design your goals by moving backwards from the end of your life to the present. Then, formulate action plans you can commit to that will get you to where you want to be.

Maintain a positive attitude. No one respects a grumpy or negative person. With a positive attitude you are looking at the bright side of life. People are naturally attracted to you when you have a positive attitude.

By being positive, you will lead a happier life as well as being surrounded by other positive people. You will also magically attract exciting offers and possibilities.

Improve communication skills. Having great leadership skills includes your being able to clearly and specifically communicate your vision, goals, skills, intentions and expectations to others.

This also includes your ability to listen to what other people are consciously or unconsciously communicating.

To become a great communicator, continually strive to improve your verbal, non-verbal and listening skills.

Motivate others to greatness. A leader is as powerful as his team. As a leader, you will want to surround yourself with a powerful team by assisting others in recognizing and utilizing their strengths, gifts and potential.

Motivating others to their own greatness will improve the group energy, increase the vitality of your projects and move you forward towards achieving your goals and vision.

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The way I see it... *by Tom Garrity*

Systems work better than you do.

One of the most important distinctions is the difference between a business and a job. Too many professionals and small-business owners think they own and run a 'business' when what they've actually done is create their own job.

Now, let's be clear – there is nothing wrong with having a job! Some business consultants give the impression that having a job is 'less than' owning a business, and I don't feel that way. For many people, in many situations, a job suits them and is the best thing for them. If you prefer a job to running your own business, good for you!

But, if you want to run a business, focus on your systems!

A business is a collection of inter-connected systems that produce results independently of where you happen to be at the time. Systems are one of the top 10 value drivers to positioning your company for maximum value when it comes time to exit your business.

Businesses have systems for taking orders, producing results, collecting payments and so forth.

A friend of mine thinks of herself as running a business, but in fact she has both a business and a job. Her job pays much better than her business and this became clear when she was on vacation this summer.

Her job paid her nothing while she was gone, but when she got home she discovered that her simple website had produced several sales for her! The lights came on big time!

Guess where she's putting more of her efforts now? You got it!

By next summer I'm betting her website will be far more extensive and will make even more sales for her.

If you run a business, work harder on your systems than you do on your job.



SOURCENOTE: With thanks to Dr Philip E Humbert

Have you ever thought about...

how to make (and keep) your business more profitable?



WE LIVE IN A relentlessly competitive world. The daily pressure to work 'better, cheaper and faster' can make even talented business owners and entrepreneurs lose sight of first principles.

As you cope with the decisions and details of running your business, focus on the fundamentals!

Regardless of the type of business or the products or services you sell, here are our suggestions for 'basics' that will make your fortune:

Customer Benefits. You and your customers must clearly understand the benefits that your products and services provide.

Most buying decisions are based on the consumer's perception that a new color will add prestige or that a smaller, lighter product will be more convenient. Customers buy benefits.

Extra Value. Customers must receive more in value than you charge for your goods and services.

Most of us don't want a 'fair exchange'; we want the sense that we got extra value for our money.

Extraordinary Service. This means attention to detail. Answering the phone on the first ring, providing an 1-800 number and 24-hour customer service numbers are examples.

L.L. Bean has made a fortune with its 'no questions' guarantee. So can you!

Know your Audience. Every business has to know their audience. Volvo and Nissan have very different audiences and their advertising, pricing and even the location of their dealerships reflect this.

Young adult audiences may value low price, while another group may value quality, performance, reliability or some other item.

This is even more critical for service organizations whose products are invisible (consulting, education, coaching, etc).

Location. In the old days, this meant the street address of your shop or store. Now it means getting your marketing messages into your customers' hands when and where they are receptive.

Be certain your website is located at the top of the search engines.

Make your Yellow Page ad larger or distinctive. NASCAR race fans are the most brand-loyal consumers in America. If you want to reach them, buy space on a race car!?

SOURCENOTE: RESOURCES FOR SUCCESS!™

BUSINESS STRATEGY

Five Sure-Fire Ways to Drive Good Employees Away by Eileen McDargh

With the severe worker drain prompted by boomers in full or partial retirement, keeping good employees has never been more critical.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT WORD in retention, however, is 'engagement'. Too many workers are present but their imagination, spirit and creativity have departed out the door with disillusion.

Consider these top five actions that pull the plug on employee energy:

Be a know-it-all and discount the input of others. A new senior level manager was brought into an organization. When department heads met with him, he proclaimed "lower cost, higher quality, more sales".

He asked for their input and then immediately dismissed whatever they said.

The fact that he had never worked in this particular industry had already prompted skepticism.

The department heads, whose support and knowledge are critical for a turnaround, have departed in droves while those who are staying just shrug their shoulders and say they'll hunker down until they find something else.

Never admit mistakes. The worn phrase from the old movie LOVE STORY proclaimed, "Loves means never having to say you're sorry."

As wrong as that advice is for intimate relationships, it is just as stupid in business.

When ego and arrogance replace the realities of a decision, employees watch in dismay.

The operating plan becomes mired in finding ways to justify action rather than admitting error and looking for a new, more promising direction.

The cost overruns on building a large golf course were huge because the senior manager refused the input of his department heads and then spent thousands trying to cover up design flaws.

Act first and think later.

The ready, fire, aim approach of shoot-from-the-hip-and-think-later is all too common in our 24/7, do-it-now world.

The results can be disastrous – particularly if the vehicle for action is e-mail.

E-mail now stands for 'escalation, evasion and error.'

The person who blasts off a response without carefully considering the tone and the names on the distribution list can find himself/herself spending time and energy undoing collateral damage.

The more critical the relationship and/or the outcome of the action, the greater wisdom is in carefully measured actions and, more likely than not, face-to-face conversation.

Create an inner circle that thinks alike.

Howell Raines, executive editor of the NY TIMES, was the subject of a 17,000-word article that appeared in the NEW YORKER in June 6, 2002.

It was a brutal expose, painting a documented story of him as an arrogant bully who played favorites, listened only to a few people and pummeled far too many.

When folks outside of his inner circle tried to tell him their concerns regarding Jayson Blair, the now infamous fabricator of news stories, Raines ignored them.

His resignation from the NY TIMES speaks to the danger of that inner circle.

The higher the stakes, the more critical it is to have input from people with various points of view and different ways of responding to a situation.

If a CEO puts people around him or her who merely parrot their beliefs, the organization is being led by lemmings.

And if the inner circle is of a ready-fire-aim mentality, there's no caution in action.



If the inner circle mirrors a slow, all-the-facts-first mentality, the organization might miss critical opportunities and be too slow to respond to a changing marketplace.

Organizations should consider using assessments in order to understand the behavioral diversity of the team.

Say one thing and do another. A high-tech manufacturing company in Southern California announced significant layoffs because of poor performance.

Every budget item was to be scrutinized.

The following weekend, the CEO took the top management team away to the Ritz Carlton in Monarch Beach so they could ponder these new realities.

Care to guess how fast the employees got wind of this 'cost-saving' move?

Or how about the professional services firm that proclaimed mandatory attendance and then repeatedly ignored a senior consultant who only showed up when he 'felt like it'.

If you want to model truth and trust, ask the people around you how often you engage in these behaviors. And if you are not happy with the answers, DO something different.

You might also need to bring in an external coach to help you with the process. The results: you win and the organization wins.

Principles for positive business ethics

THIS MORNING, I read about a company using online auctions to defraud customers.

Last week, I consulted on an ethics complaint where a business coach betrayed a client's confidentiality.

And, recently, a U.S. physician was convicted of insider trading based on information from a patient, a violation of both business ethics and her professional ethics.

Business ethics are the key to profits. If clients and customers don't trust you and your business ethics, they will not do business with you.

Would you buy from a company you didn't trust? Of course not!

Business ethics have become a hot-button topic. There are often ethical conflicts between making money and doing what is right.

There can be dilemmas about doing what is best for your employer, what's best for your own career and what's best for the customer.

Business ethics is about negotiating these mine fields.

Here are some principles for positive business ethics:

Business Ethics are built on Personal Ethics. There is no real separation between doing what is right in business and playing fair, telling the truth and being ethical in your personal life.

Business Ethics are based on Fairness.

Would a disinterested observer agree that both sides are being treated fairly? Are both sides negotiating in good faith? Does each transaction take place on a 'level playing field'?

If so, the basic principles of ethics are being met.

Business Ethics require integrity.

Integrity refers to wholeness, reliability and consistency. Ethical businesses treat people with respect, honesty and integrity. They back up their promises and they keep their commitments.

SOURCENOTE: Dr Philip E Humbert

What Makes Happy People Tick?

WHAT DO YOU NEED to do to be happy these days? There's no exact formula, but a recent book by psychologist Martin E. P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, offers a list of things a large percentage of happy people seem to do.

How many of these activities do you regularly do?

Be sociable. Happy people generally aren't loners or socially exclusive. They have more than one group of friends and acquaintances and like to work on teams.

Think independently. While liking to be with others, they don't judge themselves by what others do or think. They set their own standards.

Reject materialism. Happy people don't focus on continually buying new posses-

sions. Instead, they keep finding new things to value in what they already own: favorite articles of clothing that have grown more comfortable, tools or furniture their families have passed down, and the like.

Know your own strengths. Happy people are clear about what they're good at and enjoy making the most of their talents. Their success at what they do is a big part of their happiness.

Stay active. Happy people are busy and involved. Since they know their strengths, they seek activities that draw out their talents and absorb their attention so that time passes quickly. They generally like their jobs because they make the effort to find jobs that truly appeal to them?

SOURCENOTE: AUTHENTIC HAPPINESS

(Top Ten Ways - continued from page 1)

Be willing to admit and learn from failures and weaknesses. Face it — No one is perfect, and everyone has made a mistake or two in their lives!

The most successful leaders know that the key to success is not in avoiding falling or failing, but to learn from their mistakes.

As a strong leader, you will also be able to communicate your weaknesses to your team, so that you and your team can appoint someone who excels at that particular task or activity.

Continue to educate and improve yourself. Great leaders continue to improve themselves in every possible way. The person who thinks he is an expert, has a lot more to learn.

Never stop learning. Be receptive to everyone's perceptions and information from around the world and beyond.

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WORDS OF WISDOM

"Our task must be to free ourselves... by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living beings and all of nature."

— Albert Einstein