

The 5-Minute Guide to Becoming an Influential Leader

- SPECIAL REPORT -

In this five-minute guide, we are going to answer one simple question: what makes a great leader.

Many people will think of a leader as someone who takes tight control over a team, as someone who is loud and brash, and perhaps someone who is even a little physically intimidating when the need arises!

But as you'll see in this report, that's actually the furthest thing there is from a "great leader."

And if you act in this hands-on, aggressive manner, then you are only going to crush the soul out of your team, and stifle any real productivity or creativity.

So... Just What Is a Leader?

Of course, there will be an element of taking control, and every now and then you might need to calmly let a team member know that you aren't happy with them.

But the main roles of a leader are as follows:

- Protect the team
- Nurture the team
- Guide the team
- Inspire the team

When you can do this, you help your team to work more effectively toward end goals, while at the same time building a strong foundation that will keep the group strong for many years to come.

Let's start with that first one: what does it mean to protect team? Simple, it means creating a safe environment where those following you are able to work to the best of their ability.

In a workplace setting, this means firstly making sure that they are comfortable in their work environment, and that they are happy doing the kind of work they are doing. Making sure that their most basic needs are met is a simple priority for any manager, and one that they should take extremely seriously.

If that chair is making your employee uncomfortable... then change it right away! How can they do their best work, if they are constantly squirming in their seat?

But protecting and nurturing your team goes beyond simply looking after them physically. Of course, this also extends to protecting their emotional wellbeing, and protecting them from decisions that might come from higher up.

This usually means making sacrifices, and it means taking responsibility.

As leader, you might well have goals that you need to meet. The poor leader will get stressed about these goals and will attempt to take a stranglehold over their team to make them happen. Likewise, when things go south, that leader will then be able to *blame* the team for the mistakes!

But what effect does this strategy have on the team itself? If your team know that when things go badly, you are simply going to point the finger at them – potentially resulting in their jobs being at risk – then they are going to be *much* more stressed while working.

When we are stressed, this causes physical changes in the brain that actually stifle creative problem solving. Moreover, it causes us to rush and to make more mistakes. AND it prevents us from taking any creative risks.

Suddenly, the web designer will stop adding the flourishes that only they can bring to the design, and instead will churn out a by-the-numbers website.

Likewise, placing this kind of pressure on a team can cause them to begin to argue. Suddenly, the fact that Jeff goes for 20-minute cigarette breaks is no longer an amusing quirk but rather a serious issue that is preventing work getting done.

You know what *really* prevents work getting done? Arguments! That's why as manager, you become the first line of defense against interference from higher-up. When you fail to meet targets, that is now *your* responsibility. Taking this approach means your team remains safe, which means they can work MUCH more effectively.

Emotional Intelligence

Nurturing and protecting your staff therefore is also a matter of emotional intelligence. It means understanding what might cause them to become stressed and anxious, and it means valuing the importance of their contentment and good mood.

What else can you do to ensure that they are contented and happy working for you?

Well one key factor is to think about the way that you are delivering instructions and communicating. Your demeanor and communication will have a HUGE impact on the overall mood and feeling within the office. The reason for this, is that most teams will look to their managers and leaders in order to know how to react to news.

Thus, if you are reporting that the company has been struggling financially, you need to do so in a calm and an optimistic manner so that the team continues to work their best. Some poor leaders will use the opposite approach: they're emphasize how much *trouble* the company is in in a bid to get them to work harder!

But this doesn't work for all the reasons we have just discussed. And not only that, but it's practically inviting the team to look for work elsewhere!

Similarly, a good manager manages their emotions when communicating, and understands how the way they phrase an instruction or feedback can hugely impact on the way their team works.

For example, when you critique someone's work, you should always do so in a manner that seems impersonal, while at the same time paying complements to what the person has done well. Most important of all is to demonstrate your appreciation for the effort, and to show that the person is valued and their hard work is too.

Recognize that failure to choose the right wording can be the difference between someone happily making a change to a piece of work, or angrily storming home and refusing to complete the change out of principle!

Likewise, a great manager understands just how sensitive communication is between members of their staff – and thus they know to how to ensure they put the right people together. One of the very BEST things that any leader can do to improve, is to take a class in emotional intelligence. This is something that should be compulsory for managers in fact!

Guidance

At the moment, your leadership might be sounding extremely passive! Your role is mostly to ask things politely and avoid arguments?

Of course, the job of a leader extends far beyond this. The other crucial role is for you to guide your team toward the desired goals and outcomes.

This means firstly knowing how to turn those overarching targets into shorter, more achievable goals. You should think of your team as a resource that you must spend wisely and efficiently.

That often means reconsidering the use of meetings that don't strictly serve any purpose, and likewise it means asking whether projects and work are strictly necessary in service of the overarching goals.

That doesn't have to mean purely chasing numbers – it can also mean chasing more abstract things like work satisfaction.

But it also means that you avoid “playing manager.” Many leaders like to flaunt their authority by calling unnecessary meetings, or working on vain passion projects that ultimately just waste resources.

Know your goal, and then know how to take the right members of staff and put them in the right places to complete tasks in service of that end-point.

This is where the next point comes in: strong communication. A good leader **MUST** have excellent communication skills. Of course, the reason for this is so that you can instruct your followers in order to get the very best out of them.

Good communication in this context means firstly being able to provide clear instructions that can guide your team. If you communicate poorly, then mistakes can happen that would have been avoidable and those will be your fault.

Likewise, though communication is also important in order to provide all of the small nuances and the tones that help to make your team more responsive to what you are saying. This is how you help to manage the emotions and the motivation of your team to ensure they are constantly feeling valued and calm and therefore working to the best of their abilities.

In order to provide proper instructions to your team, make sure that you itemize each step that needs to be done in a clear and concise manner. At the same time, try to provide a *reason* for each request. This not only helps to better motivate your team, but it also allows them more flexibility and the ability to respond to changing circumstances.

If you tell your team to access the client list, and the client list is *down*, then they will come back to you for more instruction. This has wasted time and energy, while making them feel like little more than dog's bodies.

On the other hand, if you say "I need information on Mrs. Laura, please can you access the client list?" you have now provided more detailed information. As such, your team can make the decision that because the client list is down, they will instead consult some notes they took during their last call with Mrs. Laura. It's only because they understand the *reason* for the instruction that they are able to do this. This also helps them to better understand what it is they're supposed to be doing, reducing the likelihood of confusion or error.

Speak So Others Listen

At the same time, being a leader is also about being able to talk so that others will listen. You can be the best in the world at giving instructions, but if the people you're talking to aren't listening to you, then this isn't going to be of much use!

This is why many of the people who become leaders are also highly charismatic, or what you might describe as being "alpha." Is *this* something you can learn?

In the full eBook, we go into this skill in depth. But the good news that you need to know right now is that yes it can be learned.

One quick tip that can have a huge impact on your gravitas is knowing how to use long pauses and silences in order to draw an audience in. Again, leadership isn't about bombast but is instead about quiet confidence.

When you are silent for a moment, you will naturally *exude* confidence. Most people are afraid that if they stop talking for even a moment, they will lose their audience. By daring to be silent, you are able to demonstrate you have no such concern.

Further, this will cause people to learn in and listen to what you have to say, and it can instantly cause the rest of the room to fall much quieter so that they can hear you.

Likewise, you need to learn to speak using your body. That means moving your body around the room in order to command respect and attention. In order to do that, you need to believe 100% in the things you're saying. When you do this, you will naturally speak with both your voice *and* your body and that will make you much more dynamic and engaging.

The danger is that you end up looking as though you are trying to awkwardly play a character or a role. This is why it's important to practice over time and to expose yourself to the kinds of situations that will help you to develop that natural charisma.

A great example is to try standup comedy. For those who have never done it before, this is a *hugely* scary experience. But by practicing, you will find you become increasingly more confident about putting yourself out there in public. What's more, is that you will learn how to use timing and delivery to really sell your point. Acting classes can also be a great option for leaders, as these teach you to use your whole body to convey a point, as well as to project your voice in a powerful and charismatic way.

Spend time developing these skills so that you are a commanding presence in the room, and so that people listen when you talk.