

Is there a gap in your leadership skills?



by John Wright

The leadership skills (or lack thereof) of an organization's leaders have a huge effect on the well-being and job satisfaction of employees. A [2015 Gallup study](#) found that 50 percent of employees quit because of their direct managers. Because so much hinges on the leader-employee relationship—from turnover rates to successfully transitioning through a merger—one of the main reasons leaders need to be at the top of their game is to ensure the success of themselves, their employees, and the organization. To get there and stay there, leaders must continuously invest in their own learning and development.

As a leader, you are on a lifelong journey, one that will consistently require you to learn new skills and refine old ones. It is imperative that you conduct regular self-assessments and reflect on your current skill set at various points along the journey. This will allow you to be the most effective and successful leader possible and efficiently identify gaps that could negatively impact success.

Here are a few of the skills world-class leaders are committed to mastering:

Strategic and Executional Excellence

Strategic skills are crucial to establishing direction, formulating policy, and determining how resources can be allocated most effectively in order to achieve the greater vision. Strategic thinking skills are especially important when you have to make decisions that could have broader reaching effects. Pair these skills with tactical (or executional) skills, which allow you to break the strategy down into operational pieces, and you will truly be world-class.

Managing Your Time

As a leader, it is important to acknowledge that there is limited time for any particular task and your time needs to be [appropriately](#) managed in order to generate the maximum possible output. This requires you to set priorities based on the impact and then use your best judgment to manage conflicting priorities and available resources.

Confident Leadership During Periods of Organizational Change

Organizations today are nearly always in the middle of transition and change. Because of this, they require leaders who are confident in the face of change and can instill the same confidence in others. You need to be able to describe what it will feel like when you arrive at the desired destination, which will ultimately help people embrace the vision and understand why it is important. Change leaders also motivate and direct others to act on the vision by using a combination of intellect to address questions or concerns, and emotions to build a personal conviction to change.

Effective Interpersonal and Organizational Communication

Communication only occurs when the person receiving the message has internalized it, not just heard it. In order to facilitate this, you need to repeat a message several times and in different formats. As you strive to be an effective communicator, you will need to maximize the clarity and impact of your message by thinking of ways to ensure the message applies to a wide spectrum of individuals. Additionally, world-class leaders are always working on their active listening skills. While this is an incredibly challenging skill, leaders that make an effort to be attentive and respectful listeners are more likely to be highly esteemed by others.

Accelerate Employees' Performance and Produce Champions

Leaders are extraordinarily important for harnessing and releasing the talent, energy, and potential within their employees. If you have the skills to identify what is possible in others, it is your responsibility to develop them to that potential. You can most effectively do so by empowering employees to do what they are told, while granting them the freedom to use their individual judgment and skills to get it done. This allows you to identify strong, capable individuals early and accelerate their performance to ultimately benefit the individual and the organization.

Once you have acknowledged a clear area for growth that will improve your effectiveness as a leader, there are two things that will help you achieve your goals. First, it is important that you are motivated and accountable for the development of your skills. Secondly, you will need to capitalize on your organization's [learning and development plan](#). There will be programs in place and opportunities available to give you short- and long-term leadership development objectives that are aligned with business goals, as well as measurement and reporting systems that help you stay on track. The training tools used to achieve those objectives can include a broad range of approaches, such as e-learning platforms, classroom training, self-study programs, and experiential learning.

Ultimately, both the organization and its employees benefit from leaders who are committed to their personal development. It is critical not only that the organization supports the development of their leaders through a set strategy, but also that leaders take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

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