

4 must-have skills for today's leaders

In a world that is changing faster than ever, many leaders are, understandably, looking for the golden ticket—the skill that will change their results significantly. Finding that singular skill as an individual leader requires two realizations:

1. What you most need relates to your situation and skill set—there isn't a single golden ticket that helps every leader equally.
2. As you look at a changing world, remember that much about leadership isn't changing. The skill you most need is a foundational principle of leadership, not the latest fad.

With those two crucial caveats, there are four skills for you to consider focusing on today. None are new—they are rooted in fundamentals—but all are stated differently and meant to address the realities of leading today.

1. Clarity creator

In a rapidly changing world, the need for clarity has never been higher. Does your team know what the goals are? Do they know what is expected of them? And as importantly, are you personally clear on these questions?

Of course, if you aren't clear, they can't be. But even if you are, until there is mutual clarity, it doesn't matter. When people are clear about the direction and benchmark for success, they will be more productive, communication will be more effective and you will set an environment for higher trust—and performance.

2. Meaning maker

People want work that provides more than a paycheck; they want to do work that makes a difference. As a leader, it is our opportunity and responsibility to help people find that purpose and meaning. Assisting people in finding meaning in their work can range from seeing the organization's mission to helping them connect their work to that mission.

While that might be easy if you work in a hospital where the mission is clear and important, being a meaning-maker also includes helping people see how their work makes life easier or better for a teammate or the whole team.

When people work on purpose, they are healthier, happier, more productive—and more likely to stay with your organization rather than look for a new opportunity (with greater meaning).

3. Focus facilitator

Many of you have four major initiatives you are working on that are connected to the year's six organizational goals. And every day, it seems the priorities for each are changing. While I may have gotten the numbers wrong, I'm betting I'm describing your work. If I am, you need greater focus, and I promise you so does your team.

If you are frantically trying to keep up with the list and priorities, it impacts your team, even if you think you are

staying calm. As a leader, you need to help people be more focused.

Maybe the focus changes daily or weekly, but when we narrow our work to three (versus these 33) things, everyone will be more productive and successful.

Remember: If you aren't focused, your team isn't either. Is a lack of focus keeping you from reaching your goals?

4. Culture champion

Your team has a culture. The question is, is it the one that will support the team in getting the work done in a productive and human way? As a leader, you must help the team think about that question and lead the way to change the culture if you don't like the one you have. Culture will exist but only improve with a leader who thinks about, focuses, and acts on improving it.

Look at the four skills above.

Consider two questions:

1. Which does my team most need from me today?
2. How can I provide more of that for my team?

Your answers will give you clarity, focus, and meaning (see what I did there?), and provide a starting point for your personal development as a leader.