

Living As A Leader® **BELIEFS** and **PHILOSOPHIES**



Much of what we do in our work begins with fundamental human behavior. We help leaders recognize their natural strengths, as well as what inherently challenges them in their overall effectiveness. It is important that leaders are intentional about what they do well. Further, observing leaders who struggle repeatedly with a number of basic bad habits, we see over and over again that these poor habits are, pure and simple, not intentional. For this reason, we strongly advocate “intentional” leadership.

In all of the work we do with leaders, we encourage them to:

- Be Kind
- Be Humble
- Be Tolerant
- Be Productive
- Be Accountable
- ...and Serve Others

These values form the cornerstone of our philosophies, in the work we do and in how we serve our customers.



ACCOUNTABILITY

Involves *managing employee performance on an ongoing basis, including: defining expectations, monitoring, giving feedback, and goal setting.*

INSPIRATION

Involves *listening to people, involving them in decision making, encouraging them, praising their progress and facilitating their interaction with others.*

PHILOSOPHIES

On defining “leader.”

A leader is someone who accomplishes results desired by his or her organization . . . by effectively balancing workforce accountability with workforce inspiration. Most leaders inherently tilt the scale to one side or the other; few are able to achieve the right balance without further skill development.

In his book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins defined an exceptional leader as a level five leader. This type of leader has a fierce resolve for results (productivity and accountability), combined with a calm nature (interpreted as tolerance, humility and, yes, even kindness).

“Inspiration seems to be a particularly mysterious influence for leaders. We have had many over the years say to us, ‘I know I need to inspire my employees, and I don’t have the faintest idea how to do it.’”

Aleta Norris, Living As A Leader® partner

Great leaders are intentional, acting in a calculated manner with a specific result in mind. Leaders who lead by default instead are often led by their emotions. Their bad habits continually resurface and diminish their leadership effectiveness.



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On the traits of effective leaders.

Over the years, we've honed our own understanding of the day-to-day real world commitments of the most effective leaders. These are the things that matter to employees. They want leaders who:

- **Understand technical expertise does not translate to leadership expertise** – We often say, "It doesn't matter anymore how 'great' you were in what you did. NOW what matters is how well you support your employees' success."
- **Understand everyone comes from a different place** – Leaders too often judge others against their own personal skills, abilities and knowledge. Not fair.
- **Care about humility and integrity** – We see a fair amount of arrogance or feeling of position superiority. Employees do not respond well to this.
- **"Act" instead of "react"** – The inherent emotional reactions that come so naturally to leaders can leave collateral damage (as mentioned earlier). Employees value leaders who can take a moment to stop and think . . . THEN act.
- **Serve others** – A consistent message to leaders: "It's not about you." When a person accepts the responsibility of leading others, he or she has committed to serving others.
- **Ask and listen** – Many leaders interrupt and tell. This is natural. We seek to support the more intentional discipline of asking questions and listening.
- **Provide positive and improvement-oriented feedback** – Employees are starved for feedback. Fewer than 18% of employees say they have been given useful feedback from managers (Reuters 2010).
- **Recognize employees** – Only 15% of workers feel that their efforts and contributions at work are recognized (Globeforce Workforce Mood Tracker,TM 2011).

On the rarity of great leadership.

Great leaders are scarce because organizations typically promote their highest-performing individual contributors. Yet, there is no direct correlation between excelling at a particular job function and possessing the ability to lead people well. These are completely different skill sets.

We have found that some of the best managers were average performers. Star performers, once they are promoted, struggle to understand why everyone else doesn't *just do it*. After all, they did! Over time, the high performer just *tells harder*. Average performers have more patience to coach and mentor.

From our experience, few leaders are intuitively effective in holding their employees accountable, creating inspiration and approaching each day with a mindset of service to employees! So, whether we're working with a high-performer-turned-leader or an average-performer-turned-leader...well, they both deserve support.

On natural-born leaders.

We're often asked, "Are leaders born or made?" The answer is YES! Actually having a genetic encoding for leadership (at birth) will help in the development (*the making*) of a leader. There is so much involved in providing leadership to different people in different circumstances...with multiple priorities and stress-filled days. It is almost impossible to imagine that a leader can become highly effective without a commitment to knowledge and skill development over time.

On the importance of leadership development.

It is crucial for the longtime leader and newly promoted star employee to possess the skills to lead others. From your leader's perspective, he or she is judged on ability to drive and effect change. From the company's perspective, the relationship between employees and their leaders is the number one contributor to job satisfaction.* As you can imagine, ineffectual leaders—whether newly promoted or established—risk losing their jobs and can cause talented employees to leave in search of better leadership. In short, we believe employees deserve effective leadership and leaders deserve to be trained.

* Numerous studies on the relationship between leadership and employee job satisfaction have reached this conclusion. Authors Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman underscored this very point in their best-selling book *First Break All The Rules*, basing their opinion on observations from more than 80,000 interviews conducted by Gallup®.



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