

BECOME A
**BETTER
LEADER
IN 30 DAYS**



MISSION
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WHAT IT MEANS TO LEAD

If you want to take your team or company to greater heights, it starts with leadership.

Leadership is about making a real difference in the world.

There's a difference between managing people and leading them. When you lead, you ask your team to look at the big picture—the how and the why—and you invite them to be a part of something larger.



30 DAYS TO BETTER LEADERSHIP

If a management course or a coach isn't in the budget—and your company hasn't done 360-degree reviews in years—you still can improve your leadership skills. We've created a special month-long program to help you become a better leader. All it takes is 30 days (weekends off, of course)!

Great leadership starts with a vision and a process to get there. We've designed this program with a different focus each week: Leading yourself, leading another, leading a team and leading change.

You might start from the beginning and follow through this four-week plan. You might pick one section to work on each month. You might grab days 3, 14 and 19. Or you might skip ahead to leading change if that's what you're going through right now.

Some ideas will take an hour and you can do them on your own. Others will take longer and will involve other people. But just dedicating yourself to becoming a good leader is a start.



WEEK 1: LEADING YOURSELF

Before you can lead others, you must lead yourself. Master these skills this week and you will be ready to move on to leading someone else.

WEEK 1: LEADING YOURSELF

DAY 1: Assess yourself.

Ask five of your most trusted friends, colleagues or family members these simple questions: “What are my greatest strengths, where can I improve and what should I do differently?”

Take two of your strengths and find ways to make them great. Then take two areas that you’re not as good at, and develop action items to improve them.

DAY 2: Manage your priorities.

Before you start each week, schedule your work, not just your meetings. Also, make a list of daily rituals designed to keep your energy at a high level. (For example, eating right, exercise, sleep, time with a good book, etc.) Include work rituals in this list. (For example, compliment someone on good work, read industry news, or make sure to walk the floor.) Place a check mark at the end of each day next to those completed activities.

Too often, our calendars get full with commitments that others ask us to do.

We usually prioritize those first. But the most important things—the things that are more strategic and help us plan for the future—get done second or not at all. By managing your priorities, you can ensure your work takes priority over other commitments.

WEEK 1: LEADING YOURSELF

DAY 3: Build accountability.

Avoidance zaps us of our ability to take on new commitments.

Develop a list called, “What am I avoiding, what am I not being responsible for, what am I afraid to say and to whom?” Start by tackling the easiest items first.

Dean Newlund, CEO of Mission Facilitators, observed, “Once I’ve completed a task I’ve been avoiding, I am more confident, more energized and more willing to do more.”

DAY 4: Improve your emotional IQ.

The next time you assess what caused a painful discussion, break it down into three areas: What do I own about this situation? What should they own? And what perception do they have of me that I still need to manage?

Sometimes we place undue blame on ourselves or the other person. So ask yourself those three questions.

DAY 5: Build confidence.

The next time someone praises you for the work you’ve done, fully accept it and say, “Thank you.”

We often don’t accept praise, because we don’t feel like we deserve it. Confident leaders breed confidence in others.



WEEK 2: LEADING ANOTHER

Once you can lead yourself, you are ready to move to leading another person. To start, it's important to trust that others can do the work as well as you. This is sometimes easier said than done, especially for new managers. Your team may struggle with getting work done correctly and helping other team members improve. The key to accomplishing both is mentoring others to do what you do.

WEEK 2: LEADING OTHERS

DAY 6: Listen for truth.

Consciously choose to be in the moment when you listen to another person. Start with people you find easy to listen to, then graduate to those you shut out. How?

Turn off your inner monologue.

Focus on the true meaning behind their words. What are they not saying? What do they value most? We can disagree and understand—these aren't mutually exclusive. However, when you truly listen to and understand another person, you create an environment for trust and new ideas.

DAY 7: Get heard.

We each have a preferred way that we like to communicate with others, and ways we want others to communicate with us. In sales, studies have found that if a sale doesn't go through, it's not because the product or the service is wrong, but because the style of the salesperson rubbed the customer the wrong way. Flexing our communication style applies to all of us, because we're selling ideas.

Adjust your communication style to match the style of others, so your message isn't rejected because of your delivery.

This might mean slowing down your speaking, talking about outcomes vs. theories, or maybe adding historical data to a PowerPoint presentation. This doesn't mean being a chameleon or doing something that just isn't you. Look for clues and adjust your communication style to match your listener.

Learn more at MFILeadership.com

WEEK 2: LEADING OTHERS

DAY 8: Delegate.

Delegate a project to a person who is willing and able to do the task. Help the person learn and problem-solve by asking open-ended questions, and avoid giving the answers. Set clear, measurable expectations.

Sometimes there are go-for-type projects to delegate, such as, “Do these tasks exactly as I describe.” At times, this is appropriate. But strive to also delegate bigger projects, first by clarifying the outcomes and then allowing your employee to figure out the rest.

**Delegating—and then trusting your employee—
is a big step toward maturing as a leader.**

It can be hard to trust, especially if you’re delegating a task or a project that you’ve done for years. It’s easy to think: ‘What if they don’t do it as well as I? What if they fail? If they fail, I fail, so maybe I should just do it myself.’

However, with clear expectations and the right amount of support, you can be successful in expanding your employee’s role.

DAY 9: Recognize another.

Publicly recognize an employee’s success. Clearly state what they did, how they did it, and the impact they had on others. When you recognize an employee, you are affirming the value of their work.

**When employees feel valued, they become even more
engaged and productive.**

WEEK 2: LEADING OTHERS

DAY 10: Develop a career plan.

Ask an employee about his or her career goals and then develop a game plan to help them reach those goals. Don't wait for the annual review. Too much happens between reviews. Career-development meetings need to be dynamic. Find out what truly motivates your employee. What are his or her personal and professional dreams? Together, assess the competencies and experiences needed to reach his or her goals. Then, identify projects that can help your employee learn and develop those competencies.



WEEK 3: LEADING A TEAM

Once you can lead a person, you're ready to take on a team. Build on the skills you've learned and apply them to a larger group.

WEEK 3: LEADING A TEAM

DAY 11: Assess your team.

Ask your team members what they think are the team's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. (Often referred to as a SWOT analysis.) From that, identify common themes that will help you establish goals and strategies.

DAY 12: Define the mission.

Ask your team members what they think the team's mission is. Facilitate the discussion by asking everyone to answer these questions:

Who are we?

What do we do?

For whom do we do it?

How do we do it?

Why do we do it?

Combine the team's answers to create a Compelling Mission Statement. You and your team may already know the company mission statement. But there are missions unique to each team. This is also a helpful exercise if you are creating a new team.

DAY 12: Hold a daily huddle.

Hold a 10-minute morning huddle to solicit everyone's priorities for the day or week. Then make sure they align with the goals, mission and your company's values. You may need to help them re-prioritize.

WEEK 3: LEADING A TEAM

DAY 14: Lead a dynamic meeting.

There's so much time wasted in meetings. Most meetings are simply used to communicate information to others—and that communication can be accomplished through other channels.

For your next meeting, send out an agenda that states the reasons for the meeting, why people are asked to participate in the meeting, how decisions will be made, and any materials that should be read prior to the meeting.

Meetings should be about making decisions.

Clarify the agenda and answer questions: “Why should I go to this meeting? Am I coming here to listen, to make a decision, or to provide brainstorming?” Most times, people don't know why they are attending. Set up a meeting with clear goals and expectations, and you'll have stronger outcomes.

DAY 15: Solicit feedback.

Bring in doughnuts and coffee and assemble the group to share positive stories about the company or team. Great ideas often get generated by these discussions. This is a time to provide positive feedback to the team or key individuals.

Most of the time, we share feedback only when things go wrong.

Feedback can become feared. Your team may think, “If the boss wants to talk to us, something must be wrong.” Sharing successes will help reinforce what is right.



WEEK 4: LEADING CHANGE

If you are successfully leading a team, you still may struggle with leading change. Almost every company is going through major change, and learning to lead through it is the final stage in becoming a stronger leader.

WEEK 4: LEADING CHANGE

DAY 16: Engage others.

Involve a group of front-line managers or team members in a discussion about their impressions on what needs to change.

Often when a large change happens, the top leader announces it. This sends a message that the person who communicates the change owns the change. Those who implement the change should announce it.

DAY 17: Assess the willingness for change.

Ask yourself what types of attitudes, conflicting priorities, or resources might be a barrier to implementing a change initiative.

You can do this by yourself or pull others in. Will they want to change? If not, why? Ask, “What will prevent us from creating change: Resources, priorities, and/or attitudes?” This should become part of the planning process. Acknowledge the difficulties.

DAY 18: Define the benefits of change.

Describe (in one paragraph) the key benefits of a change you want to bring about. Address concerns while painting a compelling vision for the reasons behind the change. Explain what can happen if the change is made, instead of dwelling on the negative things that can happen if the change isn’t made.

People want to see where the team is moving.

WEEK 4: LEADING CHANGE

DAY 19: Communicate in a variety of ways.

Develop a communication plan that uses a variety of channels (speaking, writing, video, internet, focus groups and bulletin boards). Don't use just the method that is most comfortable to you as a leader, but one that you can tailor to different groups of people. Members of Generation Y might prefer to hear about a change initiative through texting. Baby boomers might want a face-to-face meeting.

Use all communication mediums when communicating change: face-to-face meeting, video conferencing, e-mail and print. This way everyone will get the message in the way they prefer.

DAY 20: Build credibility.

Ask a team member to share results of a recent change initiative to senior managers. Instead of communicating the results yourself, give that task to a team member who helped implement it. You might give the overview, but then introduce a person who made it happen. It gives them exposure and helps build up-and-coming leaders.



STRONG LEADERS STICK WITH IT

It takes time, practice and commitment to become a good leader.
Revisit the steps in this program, catch a podcast, or attend a seminar.
And bring other up-and-coming leaders along for the journey.

Learn more at
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Get coaching and
leadership support.

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