

officevibe

What Makes a Great Leader?

We know you're super busy. So we made this complete leadership guide to give you a hand.



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by officevibe

Oh hey there, leader!

We're so happy you popped in to read this guide.

(Exit streamers, confetti and balloons)

Honestly, there's no better time than now to level up your leadership skills. What with the future of work in full swing, **the differentiating factor for all organizations is the quality of their leadership.**

That means you!

(Party horn)

It's essential to the success of your team and company that you build up your leadership skill set, but who has the time, right? You're a busy manager. **Your schedule is probably jam packed with meetings.** Maybe you're dealing with conflict on your team? Trying to keep your boss happy?

Everyone aligned on the business goals? It's a lot, and adding something else to the list seems impossible, but we're here to guide you the whole way through.

The fact that you're here reading this guide means you care, so you're already on the right track!

A sneak peek at what's in this guide:

06 Why you have an amazing opportunity ahead of you

12 The three Leader Laws that will guide you to success

23 The top 10 skills & qualities of leaders & workplace scenarios

32 The difference between management & leadership

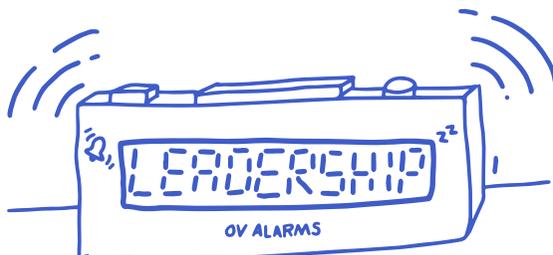
You have the coolest opportunity— ever.

Simon Sinek

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

One of the most amazing things about working on your leadership skills is that you’ll get to **see yourself transform as a person overall**. Leadership is founded in relationships and developing people (including yourself). It’s a human based role, so this journey toward betterment as a leader is at once one of personal discovery, understanding and becoming the best version of yourself. How cool!

And what’s more, once you start to grow and develop your skills, your leadership will become contagious (in a good way). You’ll inadvertently awaken the inner leader in those around you. This ripple effect is pure magic to see in action!



We believe that **leadership is for everyone, no title necessary**. So long as you have the will to lead and an inclination to help others reach their potential, anyone can be a leader.

And it all starts with you!

Leaders aren't born overnight, but all great journeys begin with just one step. If you apply the simple tips from this guide every day, and commit to practice and reflection, you'll be making a difference in no time.

Before we delve into the most important skills and qualities for leaders to develop, there's something you need to know...

The “Leader Laws”

(a must read)

Our three **Leader Laws** will be your go-to for decision making. They should guide the way you handle situations, make calls and interact with people every day. Memorize them, live them, breathe them... even recite them in the mirror every morning (we do). Essentially, these are the uncompromising principles of great leadership that must always stay in check.



Lead by example

Whatever you preach, you must also practice. In order for people to buy into your vision, you need to walk the talk. If you want employees to trust you, you have to trust them. If you want your team to admit to mistakes, you've got to do the same. If you preach work-life balance, show them that you follow your own advice. Be the change you want to see, and whenever you're unsure about what you're asking from your employees, ask yourself, do I do this?



Lead from the bottom

The role of the leader is to guide people, not command them. The days of top down structures are long gone,

and it's time for all leaders to assume their proper place. Nelson Mandela famously equates a great leader with a shepherd who “stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind.” A leader’s job is to support and guide from the bottom — to help lift others, not themselves, up into the spotlight.



Lead with humanity

It is an uncompromising law of leadership that all leaders must see their employees as people, not just workers. The future of work demands that we put people at the center of every organization by encouraging them to bring their whole selves to work. The workforce is in need of inclusive leaders who lead from the heart and consistently prioritize people over profit. Companies are nothing without the people who form them, and the best leaders ensure that the practices of the business and the team reflect this, always. *Always.*

10 skills & qualities of a great leader.



We're sure you've bookmarked and pocketed 1000 articles listing the most important leadership qualities and skills for you to develop. But who has the time to read them all? While information is good, too much information can be counterproductive. Not to worry — **we took care of plucking out the most important skills and qualities for you to focus on.** We'll also share some common workplace scenarios and how to tackle them like a true leader! You got this (strong arm emoji in your honour).

Top 10 Leadership Skills & Qualities

- 1** Create a Communication-Friendly Environment
- 2** Be Vulnerable & Build Trust
- 3** Motivate People to Move in the Same Direction
- 4** Develop Your Emotional Intelligence
- 5** Prioritize People Over Profit
- 6** Have Humility & Stay Humble
- 7** Coach & Empower Others (& Yourself)
- 8** Foster a Learning Environment
- 9** Be Accountable & Transparent
- 10** Lead Through Change & Adversity

1

Create a Communication-Friendly Environment

TL;DR

- Give & receive effective feedback
- Practice active listening
- Master verbal & nonverbal communication
- Tackle difficult conversations
- Create psychological safety

Constant communication is a foundational skill in any relationship, but on teams, the absence of communication is a sure sign of trouble. As a leader, you want to create a communication-friendly space where it's safe to express oneself and share ideas without fear or embarrassment. **Leaders must facilitate open communication by promoting the expression of differing thoughts and perspectives.** The best way to do this is to model the behaviour yourself!

Communicate:

- a. Constantly (Except on weekends, of course)
- b. Clearly (Especially with regards to relaying the company's vision and goals)
- c. Openly (Be authentic and vulnerable, you're human)

You know the drill, lead by example to encourage others to do the same!

COMMUNICATION SCENARIO

The Missed Deadline

You're meeting one-on-one with someone from your team who has recently missed a deadline, and this is when you find out that it's because they were overloaded and couldn't keep up. **Some employees have a hard time saying "no" to projects, and then fail to communicate that they've taken on too much** because they don't want to let their team down. Let your employee know that it's better to flag these issues as they arise by communicating openly with the team, before they impact the bottom line.

2

Be Vulnerable & Build Trust

TL;DR

- Be human & true to yourself
- Exercise self-disclosure
- Be your authentic self
- Emotional openness
- Offer trust by default

The trope of the strong and infallible leader is outdated, and ascribing to it can be detrimental to your success, which goes hand-in-hand with the success of your team. If you're not able to be vulnerable and open with your team, they won't be vulnerable with you, either. But before anyone can be vulnerable, there has to be mutual trust. **The best way to earn trust is to offer it out for free, so trust in your team members by default to build solid foundations in all of your relationships.** Admitting to your own imperfections will earn you the trust and respect of those who report to you and those who you report to.

VULNERABILITY SCENARIO

Stretched Out Thin

You've been put on a few additional projects recently, and you're having trouble getting it all done and properly managing your team. Your first move should be to speak with your own manager, and work with them to find solutions to help you prioritize your team. More importantly, though, you should speak with your team. Let them know that you're being stretched a bit thin, and admit that it's hard on you. Then, **remind them that they are your top priority and you're always there for them**, so you're working on finding a solution.



Amandah Wood

Employee Experience Specialist @Shopify

“People need to feel safe experimenting, failing and speaking up when they see problems or learn something new. That takes an environment of trust and for that to exist it starts with leadership being vulnerable enough to own up to failures and be open with their weaknesses.”

3

Motivate People to Move in the Same Direction

TL;DR

- Intrinsic & extrinsic motivation
- Get buy-in on vision & mission
- Align people around common goals
- Give meaningful recognition



A huge part of leadership is inspiring and motivating your team toward a shared vision and common goals. People are motivated when they feel their hard work serves a larger purpose, so take the time to demonstrate how their tasks are connected to the bigger picture. When everyone on the team has the same mission in mind, collaboration and teamwork will be their strongest. And of course, make sure everyone is receiving frequent and meaningful recognition for their efforts.

MOTIVATION SCENARIO

The Crunch Time Blues

The team has been in a crunch leading up to a big event, and everyone's been putting in extra effort. You can tell that morale is dwindling. **Don't wait until the celebration after the big event to recognize everyone's dedication.** Call a team meeting and take the time to tell them all that you see how hard they're working and how proud you are. Remind them of how their work contributes to larger company goals. Hearing it while they're in the thick of it will give them a boost!

4

Develop Your Emotional Intelligence

TL;DR

- Self-Awareness
- Self Regulation
- Empathy
- Motivation
- Social Skills

In a position founded in relationships, you must develop soft skills and emotional intelligence to navigate the human elements of your role (lead with humanity!). It starts with getting to know yourself better, and then you can **become more conscious of how your emotions influence your behaviour — and how your behaviour influences other people's emotions.** This includes the ability to identify what shapes your opinions, and avoid projecting them onto other people (or groups of people). It can be hard to understand the way that others think and feel, but working on this will help you to best address the needs of your team members in an effective way.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SCENARIO

Keeping Calm in a Crisis

Your employee made a mistake — a big one — that will have a direct negative impact on a client, colleague, or business objective. It's natural that this might cause you to panic, but what's important is how you manage that response. The last thing you want to do is get mad, lash out, or punish your employee. Your focus has to be on helping them find a solution. Meet with your employee and tell them that you'll fix this together, then talk them through it. **Ask them about what they did, what impact it had, and what needs to happen to rectify the situation.** The best leaders guide their employees through problem solving rather than telling them what to do, even in the most critical moments.

5

Prioritize People Over Profit

TL;DR

- See people as people, not just employees
- Foster an inclusive environment on your team
- Facilitate relationship building on your team
- Encourage & enable work-life balance
- Never sacrifice the wellbeing of your team for results

Putting people first is essential to modern leadership!

The better you know your team members on a personal level, the better you'll be able to guide them professionally — not to mention tap into their unique ideas and perspectives. Take it a step further by encouraging that same relationship building among team members for stronger creative collaboration and problem solving. Remember that the happiness of your employees is inextricably linked to the happiness of your customers.



PEOPLE-FIRST SCENARIO

Managing a Sudden Leave

One of your employees has a sudden personal crisis, and needs to take a leave of absence. First, reassure your employee that the team will have their back while they're away, and ask them what you can do to support them. Then, meet with your team to fill them in on what they need to know and how they can support their team member, too. Come up with a plan and reassure your team that together you'll tie up any loose ends for the employee on leave, without anyone shouldering too much.

6

Have Humility & Stay Humble

TL;DR

- Don't chase after perks or status
- Be part of the team, not separate from it
- Know that you don't know everything
- Don't let your ego get in the way
- Give credit & take blame

The strongest leaders are humble; they're not in it for the title or the status. Strong leadership is about empowering others, not being in a position of power. You need to see your team members as equals, and recognize that you have something to learn from each and every one of them. This means **having enough self-assurance to focus more on the success of your team than any personal gain** (lead from the bottom!). The magical part is that when you take on such a selfless role, you end up discovering a lot about yourself in the process.

HUMILITY SCENARIO

Giving Credit Where Credit is Due

You have a meeting coming up with the other leadership to go over the OKRs of the past quarter. Your team has been killing it, demonstrating strong collaboration and teamwork, coming up with creative new approaches and ideas, and hitting all their targets. Of course you've been doing a great job managing the team, **but rather than focus on how your effective management led them to success, talk about what they did.** This is a great opportunity to let your team's efforts shine, and it will be obvious that you supported them through it all.

7

Coach & Empower Others (& Yourself)

TL;DR

- Develop people professionally & personally
- Build confidence in your team members
- Encourage & validate the efforts of your team
- Mentor others
- Self-development

As a leader, you're only as strong as your team, so you want to build them up as best you can. Part of this is helping them develop their technical skills, but you also want to help them develop their soft skills and their confidence. Coaching your employees directly is a great way to connect with them if you have the time and expertise, but if not, it's important to set them up with the right person for the task. You should also always be striving to develop your own skills and become a better leader; this is a great way to be a role model to your team (lead by example!).

COACHING SCENARIO

Passing The Torch

You're managing a team of sales representatives, which was the role you were in before being promoted to management. You coach each of your employees individually on a technical level, but your team is growing and you're having a hard time following up on everyone's progress. Instead of outsourcing another coach, why not start mentoring one of your more experienced employees to become a coach themselves? They could become a peer coach for newer or less experienced team members, allowing you to be more effective in your coaching with the rest of the team and focus on your own development.



Angie M. Callen

*Career Coach, Resume Strategist,
& Professional Development Consultant at
CareerBenders*

“To me, the sign of a good leader is how they develop, nurture, and mentor others. If you can build someone else into a leader, you truly understand how to lead yourself.”

8

Foster a Learning Environment

TL;DR

- Ask questions instead of giving answers
- Facilitate growth & development
- Help people find solutions on their own
- Give autonomy & avoid micromanaging

Encouraging curiosity and learning won't just keep the people on your team engaged, it'll also lead to the innovative ideas that will set your company apart. **You want to create a space in which people feel safe to think outside the box, test new approaches, and yes, even fail.** Your role in this as a leader is to encourage calculated risk taking and help everyone find the lessons to be learned, regardless of whether you win or lose. As a leader, create a learning-friendly environment by speaking in terms of hypotheses, tests, and iterations rather than certainties, outcomes, and final products.

LEARNING SCENARIO

The Project Was a Flop

Your team worked really hard on a project, but it didn't turn out as planned. You might be disappointed, and you may be able to spot where it went wrong, but resist the urge to give your perspective right away! This is a great opportunity to help the team learn from their mistakes. Ask them where they think it went wrong. Have them reflect and talk through what worked, what didn't, and what they can try next time. Being an effective leader doesn't mean having all the answers, it's about helping your team find them themselves.

9

Be Accountable & Transparent

TL;DR

- Admit to your mistakes
- Own your decisions
- Keep your word
- Hold others accountable
- Share important information, good or bad

It's not easy to admit that you messed up, or take the blame when things go wrong, but as a leader it's essential to upholding your integrity. **When you make a decision, you have to own the outcome — good or bad.** If you fall short on something, admit that you screwed up and apologize sincerely. People value honesty and no one likes the feeling of being the last to know, so make sure you're updating your team on anything that will affect their work as soon as it comes up. You can't expect your employees to be accountable and transparent with you if you aren't with them.

ACCOUNTABILITY SCENARIO

Unforeseen Impact

You made a game time executive decision, and it's impacting your team more than you expected. You can sense some frustration, and possibly even some resentment, but it's too late to go back now. **Be upfront with your team and take full responsibility for the effects of your decision.** Apologize, and acknowledge that even though the impact was unintended, it's on you nonetheless. Let your team know how you plan to improve the situation, or how you'll avoid a similar one in the future.

Lead Through Change & Adversity

TL;DR

- Adaptability & flexibility
- Facilitate agile work methods
- Reassess & redefine goals and tactics frequently
- Implement new processes
- Maintain optimism

In a workforce that's evolving at an exponential pace, **great leaders need to be agile, and build agile teams who can navigate the uneven terrain.** This means reassessing and redefining goals and tactics regularly. A process that your team perfected six or even three months ago may no longer work, and your team will have to adapt on the fly. You want to inspire them to embrace change with open arms — that way, you and your team will be up for the challenge when adversity strikes.

CHANGE SCENARIO

The Team is Uncertain

The C-Suite executives of your organization present a strategy for the coming year that significantly redefines the company's bottom line. There's a palpable uncertainty throughout your team, and anxiety about how roles and responsibilities will change in their day-to-day. As a leader, it's important that you project a positive attitude toward this type of change to reassure your team that you will all adapt together. Let them know that you're there for them, then clearly outline and communicate how this will alter your team's direction, and make sure everyone's on the same page.

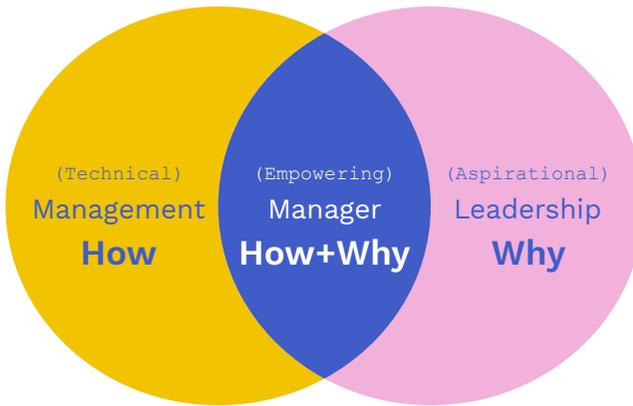
Management & leadership: what's the difference?

*Not all leaders are managers,
but all managers must be leaders.*

You probably already know this, but the role of a manager is complex. It's a two-in-one position that requires both management and leadership skill sets. The trick is finding the sweet spot between the two, and this balance, like most things, comes with practice.

At its base, Management is about the “how” you do things (the technical elements, the planning, the processes and the organization), whereas Leadership is about the “why” (engaging people by connecting everything to a larger mission, and thinking beyond the now to what could be).

Below, we map out some key differences between management and leadership — and where they overlap — to clarify the duality of your role (FYI, this list is not exhaustive).



Management

- Small picture
- Deal with the “now”
- Set, measure & help achieve goals
- Organize & plan
- Mediate & moderate
- Train employees
- Facilitate problem solving
- Time management
- Build systems & processes
- Plan budget

Manager

- Align team around goals
- Simplify business needs
- Build relationships with employees & help them connect with each other
- Coach others to develop professionally & personally
- Engage employees by connecting their day-to-day work with the larger vision

Leadership

- Big picture
- Think ahead to “what could be”
- Inspire & motivate
- Create & demonstrate vision, mission, values
- Guide others to greatness
- Self-motivated & motivating others
- Lead through change

As you can see, both areas of focus are equally important! No manager — no human being — is perfect, so it’s inevitable that you’ll have to work on building up some of your skills on both sides of the coin. Our hope is that these lists will help you figure out where the best place to start is for you.

You're on your way!



Kevin Kruse

New York Times bestselling author, Founder and CEO of LEADx

“Great leaders are lifetime learners. They should study leadership through books and courses and ideally get a coach who can offer specific guidance.”

Great job finishing this guide!

It's a huge leap in the right direction and it will hopefully serve as a go-to for you along the way (we're always here for you). Remember, becoming a leader is a continuous process. The more experiences you have and challenges you face, the more you'll grow.

In fact, being open to learning will be paramount to your success. Remember that when in doubt, consult the **Leader Laws** in this guide. A true leader is one that leads by example, leads from the bottom, and leads with humanity.

You got this!



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