

# 12 Ways to Instantly Become a Better Leader or Manager



# Introduction

Leading people is both the most complex and rewarding part of any team leader, supervisor or manager's job. **Leadership is also the most misunderstood role in many organizations.**

There are many ways to define leadership just as the word leadership means different things to different people. Simplistically, leadership is the art of getting people to do things they have either never thought possible or, didn't want to do. Leadership means influencing people to get things done to a standard and quality above their norm, and doing it willingly.

Peter Drucker in his book, *The Leader of the Future*, sums up leadership as follows:

*"The only definition of a leader is someone who has followers."*

In his book *Twenty-One Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, John Maxwell sums up his definition of leadership as *"influence – nothing more, nothing less."* Maxwell believes everything rises and falls on leadership. Leadership is the action of committing employees to contribute their best to the purpose of the organization.

Warren Bennis's definition of leadership is focused much more on the individual capability of the leader; *"Leadership is a function of knowing yourself, having a vision that is well communicated, building trust among colleagues, and taking effective action to realize your own leadership potential."*

Regardless of how different people define leadership, effective leaders are people who move others to action.



*Great leaders begin  
Each day asking themselves,  
"How can I make a positive  
Difference today?"*

*Cavo*



## Reflection

Somewhere along the line you learned what leadership is, or isn't.

Unless you are very unusual, at some point in your career you will have worked under a team leader, supervisor, manager or business owner. As a result, you would have formed an opinion of their leadership and management style and have a sense of what works and what doesn't.

Think of someone you worked for who was an outstanding team leader, supervisor or manager and one who wasn't. **Reflect on what made them outstanding and what didn't.**

*What were the stand out traits of the **best** person you ever worked for?*

*What were the stand out traits of the **worst** person you ever worked for?*

By reflecting on what makes a good manager and leader, you will begin to understand leadership is not about having a title.



## The difference between leadership and management

Leadership and management are two very distinct systems of operation. Sometimes, both of these functions overlap. Leadership and management are like both sides of a coin, each side has its own specific functions and characteristics; yet both are critical to success.

The roles of leadership and management are often blurred.

There is a distinct difference between being a leader and a manager. As a leader, you are responsible for the future direction of an organization and the processes that produce economic results. Equally you are also responsible for managing your people and the environment in which they work.

Simplistically, leaders work in the future and managers work in the present. Leaders set the direction, and managers ensure organizational goals are achieved by managing people and processes.

To be an effective leader, it is important to identify where people and processes meet.

When organizations have a balance of both leadership and management, they are well equipped to adapt to change and meet challenges along the way. Many organizations lack one or the other.

*When leadership exists without management, the organization is subject to **chaos**.*

*When management exists without leadership, the organization is subject to **stagnation**.*

## Making the transition from operator to a manager

Making the transition from an operating employee to a supervisor, team leader, manager and leader can be challenging. For some it's also daunting.

In making the transition, questions you might ask yourself are:

- *Will they like me?*
- *Will they respect me?*
- *Will they accept me?*
- *How tough do I have to be?*
- *If they become difficult, how will I handle them?*

These are very normal questions to ask yourself when transitioning into a leadership role.



You may have been appointed to a leadership role, but it's the people who report to you that will appoint you as their leader.



*Managers are appointed from above.  
Leaders are appointed from below. If you  
understand the difference, chances you  
are not a leader yet.*

*Cavo*

Unless a leader has willing followers, they are a leader in title only.

### Common mistakes new leaders make

New team leaders, supervisors and managers, particularly if they feel insecure as the designated leader, often seek absolute compliance from their people to give them the self-confidence that they are in charge. They adopt the attitude of... ***"I am the boss, you will do as I say!"***

It is usually a lack of communication skills that leads to poor management. Poor managers try to influence their people by being abrasive or aggressive. They feel their title gives them the right to bully and disrespect others.

New managers, particularly if they feel insecure as the designated leader, often seek absolute compliance from their people to assert their position. Very soon they learn that compliance is not the same as commitment and they are likely to face frustration and failure. Without commitment, people will not be innovative, take the initiative or go that extra mile.

The challenge for you as a new leader, is to nurture a robust sense of commitment by forming strong relationships with your people. This doesn't mean building individual friendships, it means building teams.

Before you can succeed in your role, it's important to understand the difference between a boss and a leader.

### Definition of a boss

A boss is someone who is in charge, especially in the work environment.



A boss can be a team leader, supervisor, manager or business owner. They can also be the dominant partner in a business relationship or the dominant member of a group who tends to give instructions and make decisions.

Being the boss doesn't necessarily make them an effective leader or manager.



If you have ever worked for a lousy boss you probably found the experience demoralizing and stressful to the point where you want to find another job.

People leave managers not companies.

Some of the traits of a poor leader include:

- They are poor listeners
- They are full of their own importance (ego)
- They lack transparency
- They lack empathy
- They are overly bossy
- They employ yes people
- They allow gossip
- They are wishy washy and can't make decisions
- They are poor communicators
- They blame others when things go wrong
- They're inconsistent

Even though you are the boss, you are still human. You can still laugh, share jokes and make mistakes. Remember to be professional though. Being too close to part of your team can show favoritism which will alienate others.

Your leadership style will have a direct influence on your ability to get results.



## Leadership vs Management

LEADERSHIP <i>Produces Change &amp; Movement</i>	MANAGEMENT <i>Produces Order and Consistency</i>
<p>Sets the Direction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates a company, personal and team vision</li> <li>• Sets strategies to achieve the vision</li> <li>• Clarifies the big picture</li> <li>• Looks to seek – recognize - secure</li> </ul>	<p>Planning and Budgeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish Agendas</li> <li>• Set timetables</li> <li>• Develop yearly plans</li> <li>• Allocating resources according to the plan</li> </ul>
<p>Aligns People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By communicating direction of the company</li> <li>• Commits people to achieving goals and objectives</li> <li>• Builds belief and empowerment</li> <li>• Develops a culture &amp; recruits people to fit that culture</li> </ul>	<p>Organizing and Staffing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides structure of the company</li> <li>• Recruits people into their roles</li> <li>• Communicates plans to the team</li> <li>• Establishes rules and procedures</li> <li>• Provides systems to monitor progress along the way</li> </ul>
<p>Motivates and Inspires</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspires and energizes others</li> <li>• Keeps morale high</li> <li>• Satisfies unmet needs</li> <li>• Keeps moving in the right direction</li> <li>• Overcomes obstacles in the way</li> </ul>	<p>Controlling and Problem Solving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop incentives</li> <li>• Monitors results through reports</li> <li>• Deals with variations</li> <li>• Plan to solve problems and take corrective action</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from *Leadership Theory and Practice*, Peter Northouse

When you first start out in your career, you need highly developed technical or operational skills (your qualifications – what you were trained to do). As you progress up the corporate ladder, your strategic thinking and conceptual skills increase and you use less of your technical skills – you develop leadership and management skills.



# 12 Ways to become a better leader

## 1. Become a leader not a boss

Those new to leadership often make the mistake of depending on authority and control to lead others, in other words they think, “**I’m the boss, I direct and you do!**” This is a myth because most people don’t like being bossed around. As a new leader if you take this approach, it is highly unlikely others will respond to you positively, instead; they will most likely resent you.

Being a boss relies almost entirely on a position of power and authority to control others to get things done. Being a “Boss” kills motivation, stifles innovation and causes negativity to infiltrate a team. If people feel like they are being bossed around, good people will leave. Those that choose to stay only do what they must and no more because they resent being “told” what to do.

At best, you will create a culture of ordinary performance.

If you boss people around, rather than lead them, there is no buy-in. Without buy-in, your people will have no job satisfaction. With no job satisfaction, they lack commitment and won’t engage. As a manager, your job is to “lead” rather than tell people what to do and when to do it. This means empowering your team, being a coach and a mentor, not a boss.



*Lead your people,  
Manage their performance.*

*Caro*

## 2. Establish credibility and respect

If you try to be “one of the guys” and use friendship to get things done, ultimately it causes resentment and increases the potential for favoritism. Trying to be a “friend” as a manager takes away any objectivity that is required when making decisions or dealing with issues. Your people will be confused wondering which hat you are wearing (*boss or friend?*). The danger is, you may find yourself in a position where you must choose; **lose respect, lose your job or lose a friend.**

It’s difficult as a new leader to establish respect and credibility, especially with your peers if you have been promoted internally.



Regardless of how you became a manager, people look for leadership not friendship. They want someone who is motivating and inspiring. Someone who leads by example and expects top performance. This doesn't mean you can't keep people accountable. It also doesn't mean you can't build a positive working environment and enjoy a friendly relationship with your team at the same time.

As a leader and manager, you can be cordial and respectful with your subordinates and teammates, but you can't be their best friend and make tough decisions at the same time.

### 3. Empower your people

New managers often feel the need to assert their new authority and establish themselves as the "boss." This is because suddenly they find themselves responsible for other people's performance and need to deliver results. Not yet being skilled in the art of management, they micromanage their teams to feel in control.

No one enjoys being micromanaged, and this is a fastest way to turn your people against you. Micromanagement delivers a message to your people that you don't trust them or they are not good enough. This can be extremely demotivating, therefore, it's important to master the art of delegation. Learn how to set deadlines and establish expectations then let your people get on with it.

People respond to delegation as it gives them a sense of empowerment knowing they have been given responsibility to think for themselves. This contributes to job satisfaction and in return you gain the respect of your people and productivity increases accordingly.

### 4. Set up your people to succeed

While you don't want to micromanage others, leaving your people to their own devices is fraught with danger as some people will take this too far. There is a fine line between micromanaging and giving too little direction. Your people not only need to know what's expected of them, they also need to know how success will be measured. You can't manage what you can't measure, therefore set your people up to succeed by communicating the standards expected of them.

The way to measure success and keep your people accountable, is to ensure they have been given a well thought through job description ensuring expectations have been clearly communicated.

In addition to a job description, an excellent method for setting performance standards is through **KPI's** (Key Performance Indicators), **PRD's** (Performance Results Descriptions) or **KRA's** (Key Result Areas). KPIs, PRDs and KRAs allow you as a manager to measure performance fairly.



## 5. Keep your people accountable

The opposite of asserting your new authority as a leader and coming down too hard on people, is to allow them to do what they like. New managers who don't like conflict might take this approach which is likely to back fire on you.

As a new manager and leader, gaining respect from your peers can be particularly challenging. It's very important to keep your people accountable and give honest feedback, even former peers.

If performance issues are not addressed as they happen, your people will believe they can get away with anything. High performers who keep themselves accountable will resent you if you are not consistent in keeping all your people accountable.



*Allowing poor performance to go unchecked, means you are giving your people permission to continue underperforming.*

*Cavo*

**KPIs, PRDs and KRAs** are the tools you need to open the dialogue and discuss where your people need to go and how to get there. They also help define the outcomes and keep your people accountable along the way. If these standards are clearly communicated, it gives your people a sense of fairness.

## 6. Be clear in your communications

New managers often assume people know what to do, even if they've been in their job for a while. Having worked alongside others doesn't necessarily mean you know them very well. Your job as a leader is to get to know them at a different level so that you can learn to manage them effectively. Learn what makes them excited, how to motivate them and what they fear or worry about.

But wait! Some people take the above advice a little too far.

Just because you are the manager doesn't mean that you are suddenly expected to know everything. If you don't know something, say so. If you don't, admit it and make it your job to find out. Take advice. You will grow in credibility if you are the type of leader who admits what they don't know and is willing to listen and learn from anyone.



## 7. Learn to delegate effectively

Some new leaders find it hard to move away from being purely in the operational side of a business and continue to do everything themselves. They underestimate the amount of time it takes to manage people.

A manager's day is often filled with meetings, e-mails, phone calls and office drop-ins from other people leaving much less time for operational tasks. Taking on too much sends a message to others that you don't trust them to do the work. Learning to balance the demands of leadership takes time. It's important to learn how to delegate tasks to free up your time to manage people.

Not delegating properly is just as problematic as not delegating at all. Learning to delegate is a core competency for new leaders and one that must be mastered. Delegating without providing the person with the necessary authority to complete the assignment is either allocation or abdication. It's important to find the balance between letting your team know what you want without telling them what to do, and delegating specific work instructions.

To help empower and grow your people, have them share their delegation plan with you so you can give them your input instead of the other way around.

The flip side of not delegating is to delegate too much without maintaining control. Although maintaining your authority is vital - it's equally important that you trust your people to do the right thing by empowering them to make small decisions on their own and only come to you when they need your input.

## 8. Change slowly

New leaders often want to make all sorts of changes straight away which can lead to chaos. It's only natural because as an operator, you understand the frustrations of the operational or technical aspects of the role the people who will be reporting to you perform. After all, you were one of them and know how to do things better, that's why you are now in a leadership role.



*People don't mind change as long as  
they are not the ones who have to  
change.*

*Cavo*



If you are new to leadership and management, you shouldn't rush into making a ton of changes in the first instance. Take your time to adjust to your new role and establish relationships before marching forward with big changes. It pays to involve your people in your planned changes and seek their input, that way you will get their buy-in.

### **No one likes changes forced upon them.**

By involving your people and getting their feedback on what works and what doesn't, you are far more likely to gain early wins. The reason being, if your people are involved and they think the changes are their ideas, they will quickly buy in to change and believe it's their idea. What you gain as a leader is their commitment.

What you are also gaining is trust and rapport. When you have trust and rapport with your people, it will be easier to bring about change in the future.



*Leaders set the standards others  
aspire to achieve.*

*Cavo*

## 9. Keep your promises

The quickest way to lose respect from your team is to fail to keep your promises. Before you accept a commitment, make sure you can fulfil it. As a new manager, it is tempting to say yes to everything. Your team and your boss will not thank you if you fail to keep your promises.

If you say you will do something, make sure you do it. If you give people a timeframe, make sure you keep to it. If you find along the way timeframes get pushed out (which they can for a multitude of reasons), let your people know why you are unable to keep to the original timeframe and give them a new timeframe. It's about building credibility with your team.

NO is a powerful word if used correctly. When you say yes to others, make sure you are not saying no to yourself.

## 10. Focus on people not the task

Before you became a manager, your main job was to complete tasks assigned to you. That's what's known as being a technician or an operator. It's what you are trained to do.



Becoming a manager means you need to let go of some the operational side of the business and concentrate on managing and leading people instead. When you rise in the ranks to a supervisory, management or leadership position, your main job is to help others complete the tasks you assign to them so that your team performs well.

It can be difficult to make the transition from managing a task to managing a team. If you can show each member of your team that you care about them as individuals and help them to achieve their goals, they will appreciate you and work hard for you.

## 11. Appreciate your team

You may have worked with your team for years but that doesn't mean to say you know them as individuals. Make them feel valued. Give them your attention and time and show sincere and honest appreciation. Remember, people leave managers not companies!

Good people leave because they feel underappreciated. A simple thank you or a job well done can make all the difference to the morale of a team. Make it your mission to catch people doing something right! It's very easy to pick on things people do wrong. Dale Carnegie, the master of human relations, wrote the book "How to Win Friends and Influence People." He developed 9 human relations principles that when used in management, are the best communication skills to help you develop as a leader and manager.

The first principle is....

***Don't criticize condemn or complain.***

The second principle is....

***Show sincere and honest appreciation.***

Think about it. There would be a time in your life when someone criticized you unfairly. How did that make you feel?

There was also a time in your life when someone gave you sincere and honest appreciation. How did that make you feel?



*You can tell how great a leader is by  
the way he treats his people.*

*Cavo*



From time to time members of your team will come under pressure from people outside your team. Other people may try to blame them for perceived shortcomings. Your job as their manager, is to stand up for them, and make sure they're treated fairly. If you do, they will repay you with their loyalty.

## 12. Share the credit and take the blame

Being in a leadership position means sharing the credit and taking the blame.

It's natural to want to point the finger at others when something goes wrong, but part of a manager's job is to be responsible for the people who report to you. Clearly, there are times when a direct report goes rogue and hides something from you. If this happens they need to be held accountable for their actions. However, you should never point the finger and blame a direct report when innocent mistakes are made.

Innocent mistakes do happen. You need to step up and accept part of the blame for it might be you did not give enough direction, you gave the wrong advice, or perhaps you delegated beyond the person's capability and did not check in with them.

On the flip side, when your team does something right, make sure to credit the team members rather than hogging the glory.

You should also know when to make sacrifices for your team. Give workers the opportunity to work on plum projects. If the team must work extra hours, set the example and work extra hours too. Consider giving your direct reports the first pick for time off at the holidays or other times of the year instead of claiming the best dates for yourself. Your people will appreciate you for it. Above all be fair, firm and appreciative.



# Steps to Success

What you have been provided with above is knowledge. Knowledge is not power unless you use it which means, it's your turn to put some of these ideas into practice.

## Developing your personal leadership style

Think of a time in your career when you worked for a leader who really inspired you. Perhaps there was a time when you were inspired by someone who did not have formal leadership authority yet was a leader.

*What is that made that person stand out in your mind?*

*My parents taught me that leaders were.....*

*In school, I thought leaders were.....*

*What kind of environment do you want to create in the workplace as a result of your opinions and ideas?*



## Getting to know your team

One of the most powerful things you can do as a new leader is to get to know your team on a different level. To do this, you ask a different set of questions from a recruitment interview. It's called the **Innerview** – where you drill down into how a person thinks and feels.

Once you have conducted the *Innerview*, you will then have the information you need to bring out the best in them.

### Fact Questions

- Where were you born?
- Where did you grow up?
- Where did you go to school?
- When did you leave school?
- What was the first job you had?
- Tell me about your family?
- What do you like to do in your spare time?

### Cause Questions

- Why did you go to that particular school?
- What attracted you to that particular job?
- What caused you to make that decision?
- How did you get involved in your hobby/sport?
- How did you come to work for .....?

### Value Questions

- Tell me about a person who had a major impact on your life?
- If you had your life over, what would you do differently?
- When you look back at your life, was there a turning point?
- Tell me about a time you found particularly tough?
- Tell me about a time you found particularly exhilarating?
- What words of advice would you give a young person just setting out in their professional life?
- In a sentence or two, how would you sum up your personal philosophy in life to your children?



## Setting Standards

Standards are not the same as activities. You can't do a standard, you reach it.

### **To be effective, standards must be:**

- Aligned to your vision and values of the team
- Achievable – not pie in the sky or they will demotivate your team
- Specific
- Written down
- Measurable
- Agreed by all members
- Communicated and understood.
- Universal – applicable to all members of the team
- Consistently upheld
- Non-negotiable while in place
- Reviewed regularly to ensure they are still relevant

### **Standards should be put in place at two levels:**

- General standards the entire team adhere to. Example, dress code, code of conduct, responding to customer enquiries etc.
- Specific standards that apply to individual roles. These could be written into a job description or as a separate document (KPIs, KPAs, KRAs)

### **KPI, KPA or KRA standards could include:**

- Sales volumes.
- Gross contribution
- Net profit of territory or division or section
- Number of new customers obtained/lost
- Average order size or order value
- Level of repeat business
- Records, reports and administration
- Market and client information
- Product knowledge
- Sales and negotiation skills
- Time Management skills
- Dress code/uniform compliance
- Compliance with Occupational Health and Safety regulations
- Communication
- Relationships with colleagues
- Attitude
- Care of company assets



Focus on those areas which have the greatest impact on personal and team success according to your team vision, shared vision and company vision.

Properly in place, the Job or Position Description and standards enable all your team members to work effectively, without interference, in the comfort and knowledge that their performance will be considered on a fair, open and agreed basis.

### Motivating the team

Brainstorm some positive moves you plan to implement to keep your team motivated.



Fantastic – you are good to go!

For more Strategez for Success, go to <http://www.strategez.com>

Feel free to share this toolkit with others.

Sincerely



*Carolyn (Caro) is an inspirational leader, motivator and founder of Strategez for Success. Caro holds a Master's in Business Administration (MBA), is a Certified Practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), a Sales Trainer, Business Coach and published Author.*

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