

The Leadership Development Plan

Ten Keys

The article discusses ten key steps which provide the foundation for a leadership development plan. These steps also act as a guide in improving your life personally, professionally, and spiritually.



Many people are born leaders, yet the ability to lead is actually an art and an amazing collection of skills which can be learned and sharpened through a series of daily habits and activities. The following ten keys will provide the foundation for a powerful leadership

development plan and can be your guide in expanding what is possible in your life personally, professionally, and spiritually.

1. Start Your Day with Intention

There is a direct correlation with how you start your day and the quality of your life. Most people start the day in a hurry and as a result play catch up all day long. Unless you try something different, this sense of not being able to get it all done won't change. Here is a suggestion. Spend 10-15 minutes each morning for daily reflection looking at the major areas of your life: career, relationship, family, community, and spirituality. Ask yourself what are you grateful for and what do you intend to accomplish. Then ask

yourself what will be the highlight of your day. By asking yourself this question you will have created a positive expectation throughout the day. No matter what is going on or who you are interacting with, you can always ask yourself this question. Remember this time in the morning is your time and no

one else's; therefore, it is essential to take this time before listening to the news or reading the paper. This practice becomes a spiritual practice and mental discipline so that your ability to focus and concentrate increases dramatically. You also expand your ability to say no to limiting beliefs.

2. Be Dedicated to a High Level of Learning

Great leaders are highly competent, because they are dedicated to a high level of learning, growth, and improvement. They know the worse thing they can do is to be too comfortable. Spend 15-20 minutes each day devoted to learning something new. Do not settle for knowing "how" to do something. Dig deeper by asking the question "why" and then go find the answer. Search the Internet, consult with experts, or take a day trip to find the answer to a question that is on your mind or the minds of those who follow you. Don't hesitate to hire a consultant, coach or expert in your field. At the end of the day ask yourself "what did I learn today?"

3. Follow a Regular Exercise Routine

One of the most beneficial and practical habits you can develop is a regular exercise routine. There is no question that regular exercise has many benefits. The most energetic people that I come in contact with all exercise. They look better, feel better and always seem to have time to do what they want. From a time management perspective they are mentally alert, more efficient and able to get more done in less time. From a health perspective there are numerous studies that document the value of exercise...just read any of the bulletins from the American Heart Association. An additional benefit is that many leaders have asserted that during exercise solutions to challenges are revealed.

4. Discover Your Strengths

The strengths profile finder from the book *NOW! Discover Your Strengths* by Marcus Buckingham and Donald

O Clifton, Ph.D., is a revolutionary program which can show you how to discover and then develop your unique talents and gifts. One of the secrets to discovering your leadership potential lies in your ability to exercise your strengths, not in dwelling on your weaknesses. This tool by Buckingham and Clifton can guide you to becoming a high performing and empowered individual.

5. Be an Innovator by Tapping into Your Creativity

Many adults move through life thinking, "I am not creative," and wondering "What if?" As humans, we all have the ability to be wildly creative, and sometimes, this requires practice. By spending time each day with the support of tools such as *Five Star Mind* by Tom Wujec, you can begin to unlock and expand the creative potential that lies deep within you. Using puzzles, mind mapping, word association, and the power of curiosity, you can stimulate your intuition, innovation, and creative expression. As Napoleon Hill stated, "All the 'breaks' you need in life wait within your imagination. Imagination is the workshop of your mind, capable of turning mind-energy into accomplishment and wealth." As your creativity soars, you will find that others will view you as a leader and will be attracted to you for your amazing ability to be innovative.

6. Be Willing to Interrupt Your Thought Patterns

Herbert Benson, M.D., a Harvard cardiologist, in his latest bestseller *The Breakout Principle*, describes a four stage process in which new insights and peak experiences are achieved. According to Benson and his researchers, the first stage in this process occurs when there is a crisis or a problem that you are attempting to solve. In the second stage what is important is to interrupt your thought pattern by breaking away from your predicament and doing something totally different. You might leave the building and take a walk, go to the gym, or listen to some music. In the

third phase, when the mind is less stressed and less cluttered, the peak experience or solution occurs quite often accompanied by something unexpected—a surprise that produces new ideas or higher levels of performance. In the fourth phase you incorporate your new insights and improved performance into your everyday way of life and live from this new standard.

7. Start or Join a Master Mind Group

Did you know that Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone were all members of a Mastermind Group? This group of leaders knew something many of us do not know. They knew that the key to their success was in their ability to rely on each other for feedback, ideas, accountability, and above all...support! These men controlled much of the industry of the US during the height of their careers. Innovation and expansion in human thought often result from teams that mentally capitalize on the principle of collaborative thinking. With spontaneous expression and interchange of thoughts with folks who are up to big things in life, a mastermind group can shift your awareness, expand your thinking, and can take you to unprecedented levels of leadership.

Mark Susnow has a unique background... A former successful trial attorney for 30 years and musician, he integrates what it takes to be

successful in the world with the inner wisdom unfolded to him through years of yoga and meditation. As a leadership consultant and inspirational leader, Mark provides inspiration and motivation to many business leaders and professionals. He knows what it means to have the courage to have a big vision and what it takes to accomplish it. He can be reached at mark@inspirepossibility.com and his home page is www.inspirepossibility.com



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8. Don't be a One Trick Pony

Most people spend too much time working. They don't realize they have a choice. If you spend all your time and energy working, you limit your understanding of yourself and of people in general. You will be unable to see the big picture. From this limited perspective you will find it difficult to connect with other people and to enroll them in your vision. Have an open mind and develop interests and hobbies and become a complete person. Become involved in your community and become interested in how you can contribute. Quite often it is outside the office when you make the key strategic alliances.

9. Develop the Ability to Fully Express Yourself and be a Better Communicator

Have you ever had a meeting or encounter with someone and as soon as it was over, you said to yourself "why didn't I say that?" If you haven't had that experience you are unique. The ability to express ourselves is an essential tool in our ability to create impact. Develop this skill. Be aware of what you are really feeling in the particular moment so that you do not make agreements you do not intend to keep. You might want to consider joining Toastmasters or Speaking Circles to fine-tune your ability to speak on your feet.

10. Embrace Change

It happens everyday... that is change. Prepare to adapt to what is happening. Have you ever noticed how rapidly children change and we as adults try to put the brakes on change. Studies show that the average person has at least five different careers. Change can lead to innovation and can be exciting. Ask yourself what is possible. Ask yourself what can I create? Prepare yourself for change. Try something like yoga. It makes your mind more flexible and as a result you look at life differently. ✨

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