
MAGENTA INSIGHTS



THE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS THAT KEEP ON WINNING

Sustaining the passion and getting the job done - with and through others

THE FOUR LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS THAT KEEP ON WINNING

INTRODUCTION

“Don’t try to be original. Just try to be good”: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Success as a leader means you are **good** at setting the right direction, being smart and clear about the best pathway to your goals, and then engaging, aligning and energising people to deliver them.

Over the course of my professional life I have had the opportunity to work with, and observe in action, a great number of leaders as clients, and as colleagues.

I’ve had the privilege of working with leaders in the charity and not-for-profit world, government leaders, hospital leaders, leaders from the world of elite sport, academics, and leaders in life saving health research. And of course, most often, with corporate leaders from a wide array of industries and businesses – locally and around the world – and through upswings and downswings in the economic cycle.

Being involved in the design and delivery of leadership consulting, coaching and development services to clients including Macquarie Bank, ebay, Lend Lease, Ernst&Young, The CSIRO, and The Commonwealth Bank has enabled me to learn a lot from the experience, wisdom, enthusiasm, and, sometimes, the trials and errors, of many, many leaders, at all levels in their organisations.

Successful leaders are all different in many ways – with differences shaped by their personality and style, strategic challenge, operating environment, peers, team dynamics and more.

However, in observing leaders in action over the years I have noticed that those who continue to succeed are good (or great) at consistently executing a relatively small number of behaviours and activities. The purpose of this paper is to share these, with the hope that doing so simplifies your leadership journey, highlights areas of existing strength to stay focused on, and perhaps encourages additional effort or activity in some areas to help you get better results. The concepts are not original (leadership is a very old science and art form), but they will help you be good at it.

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HOW DO PEOPLE TYPICALLY DESCRIBE THEIR ROLE AS A LEADER?

At the beginning of most leadership group sessions I ask each participant to record, individually, how they would define the essence of their role as a leader.

After a short time for reflection, people call out their thoughts, which we capture on flipcharts. Without fail we end up with long, long lists of things people feel they need to 'do' to be good leaders.

By way of example, I've listed below the actual words called out when completing this short exercise with a group of 18 financial services leaders recently.

- Influence
- Inspire
- Energise
- Set the direction
- Be visionary
- Innovate
- Be courageous
- Be accountable
- Create excitement
- Build trust
- Be mentally strong
- Share experience
- Coach people
- Be empathetic
- Lead by example
- Stimulate creativity
- Be customer-centric
- Empower
- Deal with issues and crises
- Negotiate
- Motivate people
- Be authentic
- Make smart decisions
- Build succession
- Be an 'A-player'
- Network
- Give honest feedback
- Remove the barriers to performance
- Be extraordinary
- Show confidence

I'm usually left exhausted just writing the list. It's daunting in scope and depth. Yet the list looks reasonable. There aren't any items that you would strike off as being irrelevant. And of course most leaders also have 'day jobs' – with ongoing management tasks, projects and customer interactions to deal with.

The scale of the challenge becomes even more daunting for leaders as they are inevitably bombarded with wise words from many quarters, professionally and personally, on what it takes to be an extraordinary leader. The world is awash with leadership literature.

In the face of all this expectation and opinion, de-cluttering the leadership role can be incredibly helpful.

BE
CLEAR

BE
CAUSATIVE

BE
CONSISTENT

BE
CONNECTED

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BE
CLEAR

- Know where you are now, where you are going – and how you're going to get there (and keep refreshing these particular points of clarity)
- Attend to 'why' before 'where', 'when', 'what' and 'how'
 - We all need context and clarity of direction to really engage with what is expected of us
 - Keep talking about your organisational purpose - why it exists
 - Adding meaning to roles and goals is vital
 - This provides renewable organisational energy and a solid anchor point for decision-making
- Ask before tell (and listen)
 - Important at both the personal level as well as organisationally when thinking strategically
 - Listen well
 - Encourages openness
 - Encourages new ideas
- Understand yourself – be clear about what makes you tick, your leadership style, how you deal with change, and where you go, behaviourally, under pressure. This is a condition precedent to properly understanding others, and provides a platform for you to grow from.
- Understand who your key stakeholders are - and what they most value
 - Owners
 - Customers
 - Team
 - Partners, suppliers
 - Community

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- Make sure **you** have clarity. In addition to understanding what your key stakeholders most value, as a leader there are a number of things you'll need to be clear about. This includes clarity of your market, competitors, risk appetite, role, goals, the pathway and initiatives to achieve the goals, and the key performance ingredients and dependencies that enable outstanding performance in pursuit of the goals
- Make sure **your team** has clarity - about their role, its dependencies and its link to your organisational purpose, and to your strategy and short-term goals.
 - Levels of empowerment and your accountability expectations are also crucial clarity areas for your team
 - Never assume people have all the clarity they need
 - How do you know people are clear? Only when they say it back to you .
- Tell stories
 - Stories help make the bigger picture clear – they have a beginning, a middle and an end
 - Stories are more memorable
 - Stories provoke more emotion
- Keep the key messages short (and have no more than three) – but keep saying them.
- Talk about leadership, as a dedicated subject, with your peers, and with your boss. Talking about it makes it clearer in your own mind, and provides the opportunity to gain fresh ideas, and different perspectives, from others.
- Wherever possible, deliver bad news in person – so you can be clear how the news has landed and do what you can to help
- Celebrating achievement makes the achievement much clearer.



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BE
CAUSATIVE

- Work with the laws of physics....
 - Energy is the lifeblood of performance. As a leader be alert for people and things that sap it – and regularly take steps to boost it. Managing your own energy levels is especially critical.
 - Create momentum by moving fast (responding to opportunities, covering the ground, address weak spots in your performance) as much as you can
- Promote a growth mindset. Carol Dweck's seminal book 'Mindset' reminds us of the importance of being open to the potential in everyone, being positive, and pushing the limits of that potential.
- Delegate, empower and provide stretch opportunities
- Promote people. I worked with a leader once whose sole point of reference when measuring his own success was the number of people in his team whose performance each year warranted promotion.
- Drive continuous improvement initiatives. This requires leaders to articulate an aspiration for continuous improvement and create a sense that ideas are valued and acted on.
- Make changes before you have to. Inertia is not a winning 'state'.
- Sharpen your focus – and that of your team. Short lists enable concentrated effort and this gets things done.

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- Do what you say you will – credibility and reliability are builders of trust – and trust creates confidence and engagement
- Hold yourself and others accountable in a clear and elegant manner
- No ambushes and few surprises – uncertainty derails confidence, and promotes a sense that the leaders is not in complete control
- Persist with initiatives (or ditch them overtly). The extrapolation of this point is to keep your list of key initiatives short. Being prepared to let go of initiatives that, for whatever reason, no longer best serve your goals can be hard for leaders. But it shows leadership.
- Manage your emotional state, especially when the pressure is on. This requires self awareness and practiced strategies that enable you to stay focused on the big picture, your leadership impact, and the best next steps to achieve your goals
- Don't have favourites. It's unfair, and cliques kill teamwork.



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- When working with others as a leader, remember the wise coaching adage.... 'being with before doing with'. You'll find it far easier to influence, energise and activate your team if you make the effort to 'be with them' *before* you try to achieve results through them.
- Inspire by your actions first - you can't talk yourself out of something you've acted into. As a leader you're always 'on show', and what your team see in your actions plays a vital role in their willingness to connect with you and your message.
- Communicate frequently and consistently.

As the old Cuban proverb says, "Listening looks easy, but it's not simple. Every head is a world." And those worlds get very full of lots of diversions and distractions. Leaders often confuse hearing and listening. For a great variety of reasons, valid or otherwise, leaders' messages often land on team members like a gentle whisper. This is why repetitive messaging is powerful. Sometimes 33 'whispers' will be needed before the leaders' message is truly heard.

- Leverage your network for your team. What doors can you open to get things done for others, to provide new opportunities and to accelerate people's growth?
- Take all opportunities to say 'well done'. This says you noticed, and you care – both of which are great connection boosters.
- Stand for and create strong teamwork - wherever teamwork is needed
- Understanding the dynamics of trust – and especially how perceptions of self interested action damage it - is highly beneficial for leaders, at all levels.

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Individually and collectively you'll find these behaviours
inspire, galvanise and align your team,
and deliver the results that create value for you,
and for your stakeholders.



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