



Five Golden Rules for Leadership

Are leaders born or made? One could argue for either position.

The real issue is that all leaders can improve. Whether you're a seasoned executive or a high-potential team member, you can boost your performance in five crucial leadership areas.

More than half a million business books deal with leadership acumen, but studying the most respected experts' ideas reveals a consensus on the foremost roles required for effectiveness.

In *The Leadership Code: 5 Rules to Lead By*, (Harvard Business Press, 2011) Dave Ulrich, Norm Smallwood and Kate Sweetman have synthesized current thinking on leadership and developed a framework that blends idealism with realism. They've distilled leadership into five core roles, regardless of one's industry or business environment:

1. **Strategist**—Leaders shape the future.
2. **Executor**—Leaders make things happen.
3. **Talent manager**—Leaders engage today's talent.
4. **Human-capital developer**—Leaders build the next generation.
5. **Personal proficiency**—Leaders invest in their own development.

A Framework for Effectiveness

Having a framework for the most essential leadership skills will help you avoid quick fixes and business-book fads. While the scope of leadership may seem overwhelming, five golden rules provide much-needed focus.

Leaders must excel in many areas: innovative strategies, long-term customer relationships, quality execution, high-performing teams and accountability. They need to manage people, communicate well, engage and inspire others,

A Message from Nancy...

I have a couple of questions to ask you:

1. Is your business as successful as you think it should be?
2. Are you and your team able to pinpoint the solutions necessary to create positive changes to get where you need to go?

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exercise keen judgment and decision-making, excel at emotional intelligence and demonstrate ethical integrity. It's easy to get lost if you pursue the wrong priorities.

With a clear and concise framework that covers the entire leadership landscape, you can concentrate on how to become more effective and determine the best ways to develop talent. *The Leadership Code* offers five pivotal rules that lay out how the game is played. Knowing them enables you to modify your behavior and ultimately succeed.

Rule 1: Shape the future. As a strategist, you must answer the question "Where are we going?" for the people you lead. You not only envision the future, but help create it. You need to figure out where the organization must go to succeed, while pragmatically testing ideas against current resources and capabilities. Work with others to figure out how to move from the present to the desired future.

How informed are you about future trends, both inside and outside your field? How much time and attention do you allocate to future planning? How will you inspire your people with vision, purpose, mission and strategies?

Rule 2: Make things happen. As executors, leaders focus on the question, "How can we ensure we'll reach our goals?" You must translate strategy into action. You'll need to transform plans for change into measurable results by assigning accountability, knowing which decisions to manage and which to delegate, and ensuring that teams work together effectively.

This means keeping promises to multiple stakeholders. It also means ensuring that systems are in place for others to perform with the support and resources they need. Discipline is required. How can you help your people create their own high-performance results? Do you know when to step in or, conversely, step back?

Rule 3: Engage today's talent. As a talent manager, you're in charge of optimizing teams' performance. You must answer the question, "Who goes with us on our business journey?" You need to know how to identify, build and engage talent for immediate results.

How can you bring out the best in people? Do you know which skills are required and where to find talent in your organization? How can you best develop and engage people, guaranteeing that they turn in their best efforts?

When you excel at talent management, you generate personal, professional and organizational loyalty. Talent thrives when you provide nurturing and developmental opportunities.

Rule 4: Build the next generation. As a human-capital developer, you'll need to plan for the next generation. You must answer the question, "Who stays and sustains the organization for the next generation?" Just as talent managers ensure shorter-term results through people, human-capital developers make sure the organization has the longer-term competencies and people required for future strategic success.

This rule requires you to think in terms of building a workforce plan focused on future talent, developing that talent and helping employees envision their future careers within the company. You cannot overlook the fact that the organization will outlive any single individual.

Rule 5: Invest in yourself. Leaders must model what they want others to master. Leading others ultimately begins with yourself. You cannot expect to influence followers unless you invest time and energy on your personal proficiency, individual strengths, self-awareness, and emotional and social intelligence. If you're not working with a mentor or executive coach, you're missing out on one of the most effective ways to build strengths and talents.

A Review of Leadership Theories

How do these five rules fit in with other leadership theories?

Leadership has evolved from the military models of centuries ago to contemporary theories of scientific management, situational leadership, servant leadership and other widely discussed styles.

The primary principles of effective leadership nonetheless remain consistent. Without effective leadership skills, no one will follow you.

Here's a look at some traditional leadership theories, based on the key questions journalists ask to uncover a story: who, what, when, where, why and how.

- 1. Who is a leader?** The image of a tall man in a dark suit, impeccably groomed, comes to mind. He is authoritative, with a firm handshake, warm smile and steady gaze. For a long time, leaders were sought for their physical traits: height, gender, heritage, education and speaking style. This approach proved to be based on false assumptions, but such prejudices still exist in the C-suites. Today, it's called executive presence. The criteria have changed somewhat, but people are still influenced by looks.

2. How do leaders act? Leadership has been defined by behavioral style. There are six distinct leadership styles, according to Daniel Goleman, Richard E. Boyatzis and Annie McKee, authors of *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*:

- **Directive:** Immediate compliance. Giving orders, or telling someone what to do.
- **Visionary:** Providing long-term direction and vision for employees. Inspiring action through personal and professional vision.
- **Affiliative:** Creating harmony among employees and between the manager and employees. Fostering a harmonious environment.
- **Participative:** Building commitment among employees and generating new ideas. Collaborating to achieve a goal.
- **Pace-setting:** Accomplishing tasks to high standards of excellence. Setting high standards that challenge the team to keep up.
- **Coaching:** Long-term professional development of employees. Determining how to help people address their strengths and challenges. Creating a development plan to help them achieve their potential.

In general, these styles define a leader by how he or she behaves. Do you “take charge” or “take care”? Leaders exhibit a preferred style, but the effective ones can be both soft and hard; they’re flexible in switching between managing tasks and caring about people.

3. When and where do leaders focus on the person or task? This question relates to situational leadership. The appropriate leadership style depends on understanding situational context and specifics.

4. What do leaders know and do? What are the key leadership competencies? What core body of knowledge, skills and values define successful leaders? In this leadership model, the focus is on both the situation and the business strategy.

5. Why does leadership matter? Some leadership theorists have shifted away from competencies to focus on results. Leadership is about getting the right results in the right way. Leaders need to achieve a balanced scorecard of employee, customer, investor and organizational results to provide sustainable results.

Are there universally shared leadership characteristics? Experts estimate that 50 to 85 percent of leadership characteristics are found in all effective leaders. The missing variables are personal situations and internal influences.

You can improve by focusing on the main characteristics that define those who succeed at leading others. *The Leadership Code’s* five-rule framework represents 60 to 70 percent of fundamentally effective leadership. While there may be variances in strategy, vision and individual job requirements, the rules are designed as a foundation for effective leadership.

Understanding the Five Roles

Most people are naturally predisposed to excel in one or two of the first four roles: strategist, executor, talent manager and human-capital developer. Some are big-picture strategists and future-oriented, while others love getting things done or engaging people for high performance.

If you’re in a more senior role, you’ll need to branch out from your predisposed areas of excellence. You’ll be required to master all of the first four roles or surround yourself with people who can fill in the gaps for you.

The last role (personal proficiency) is, in many ways, the foundation for improving skills in the first four roles. Personal proficiency will help you become a more rounded leader. It is the only one that cannot be delegated, although having an executive coach can help you develop more rapidly.

Personal Proficiency

At the heart of leadership effectiveness is the ability to continually learn and enhance your personal effectiveness.

You are not solely defined by what you do or know. In fact, there’s a lot you don’t know about yourself because everyone has limited vision and blind spots. We err in thinking. We jump to conclusions. We have poor communication habits that could definitely improve. Personal proficiency takes time, vigilance and help from others.

Who you are as a leader has everything to do with how much you can accomplish with and through other people. In *The Leadership Challenge*, James Kouzes and Barry Posner cite three reasons why people follow someone:

1. Integrity
2. Competency
3. Forward thinking

Leaders are learners and learn from mistakes, successes, books, coworkers, bosses, friends and life itself. Leaders are passionate about their beliefs and willing to examine them at every occasion.

The Leadership Code Summary

1. All leaders must excel at personal proficiency. Without a foundation of trust and credibility, you cannot ask others to follow you.
2. All leaders must have one towering strength. Most successful leaders excel in at least one of four core roles: strategist, executor, talent manager, or human capital developer. Most are personally predisposed to one of these four areas (i.e., their signature strength).
3. All leaders must be at least average in their weaker leadership domains.
4. The higher you rise in an organization, the more you need to develop excellence in the remaining domains.

How can you use this framework for effectiveness to improve your leadership abilities?

Learn more at <http://leadershipcodebook.com/where> you can take the online Leadership Code Self Assessment.



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