



People WHO BECOME

l e a d e r s

DON'T *always seek*

THE **challenges**

THEY **Face.**

CHALLENGES

also SEEK **leaders.**

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1 Leadership: What People Do When They're Leading

Leadership is everyone's business. That's the conclusion we have come to after over two decades of research into the behaviors and actions of people who are making a difference in organizations, clubs, teams, classes, schools, campuses, communities, and even in their families. We found that leadership is an observable, learnable set of practices.

Contrary to some myths, leadership is not a mystical and ethereal process that cannot be understood by ordinary people. Given the opportunity for feedback and practice, those with the desire and persistence to lead—to make a difference—can substantially improve their ability to do so.

The *Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI)* is part of an extensive research project into the everyday actions and behaviors of people, at all levels and across a variety of settings, as they are leading. Through our research we identified The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® that are common to all leadership experiences.* In collaboration with others, we extended our original findings to student leaders and to school and college environments and created the student version of the *LPI*.

The *Student LPI* is a tool, not a test, designed to assess your current leadership skills. It will identify your areas of strength as well as areas of leadership that need to be further developed.

The *Student LPI* helps you discover the extent to which you (in your role as a leader of a student group or organization) engage in the following Five Practices of Exemplary Leaders:



Model the Way

Leaders are clear about their personal values and beliefs. They keep people and projects on course by behaving consistently with these values and setting

*For more information on our original work, see *The Leadership Challenge* (3rd ed.) (Jossey-Bass, 2002).

an example for how they expect others to act. By focusing on key priorities, they make it easier for others to achieve goals.

The commitments of leaders to Model the Way involve

- **Finding your voice** by clarifying your personal values
- **Setting the example** by aligning actions with shared values

While Jason Hegland was the captain of his water polo team, he learned the hard way about how to be the team leader: “First, I was just plain bossy. I was also stubborn. Things were supposed to go *my way*. Worst of all, I didn’t show anyone else what they meant to the team as a whole. I cut people down when I should have built them up.” Luckily, early in the season, a teammate brought these flaws to his attention, and, to his credit, Jason reflected on what was really important and quickly made changes, in his words, “to show everyone how a real captain acts.”

One of the first things he did was to get himself to school every day at 5:00 A.M. for practice. When he saw other players during the day, he would ask them why they weren’t at practice. Soon enough, Jason said, “The message about practices sunk in and we had 100 percent attendance.” He also opened up communications. Every day he asked his teammates: “What didn’t we do well yesterday that we need to work on today?” He asked those who were better players than he was what he needed to do to improve himself. Furthermore, Jason stopped focusing on errors and became the “head cheerleader” for the team, mentioning at each postgame meeting at least one good thing that each of his teammates had done.

As for results, Jason pointed out that, while the changes he made in his leadership style didn’t lead his team to the state championship, it was the first time that any school from a Chicago suburb placed within the top ten, and most importantly, he said, “That year the team members were the closest that they had ever been to one another.” The lesson for Jason: “I learned that those who follow you are only as good as the model you present them with.”



Inspire a Shared Vision

Leaders look toward and beyond the horizon. They envision the future with a positive and hopeful outlook. Leaders are expressive and attract other people to their organizations and teams through their genuineness. They communicate and show others how their interests can be met through commitment to a common purpose.

The commitments of leaders to Inspire a Shared Vision involve

- **Envisioning the future** by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities
- **Enlisting others in a common vision** by appealing to shared aspirations

The insight for Filip Morovich was learning that “leadership is not about being the great heroic solver of all problems; it is about inspiring people to believe that the problem can be solved by working together.” In one of Filip’s courses, the assignment was to produce a one-hour musical play (with singing, dancing, and all the rest!). Pretty much everyone in the class was afraid and daunted by this task because few of them had any theater experience or particular acting talents. Filip described the scene: “The group was adrift and everyone was sitting around staring at one another in stark silence. I got very angry inside, and at that instant I had a vision. A real flash of lightning in my mind made it clear to me that we could be successful. But at this point it was only my idea, only my flash of inspiration, and so I had to share it and make it a common belief among us all.”

He decided some drama was necessary to get everyone’s attention, so he picked up his pen, raised it high in the air, and dropped it onto the binder on his lap. A bomb going off in the room could not have been louder. This had the intended effect and Filip launched into inspiring a shared vision: “I used a hopeful and positive tone of voice. I was excited and called on our collective strength as a team to move forward and be successful. I hoped that my excitement and positive mood would prove infectious and revitalize the group. We all noticed an uplift of our mood and we could literally see a sparkle of hope returning to one another’s eyes. The key was making the vision of our success a joint process because we all came to believe that we could do this.”



Challenge the Process

Leaders are pioneers—people who seek out new opportunities and are willing to change the status quo. They innovate, experiment, and explore ways to improve the organization. They treat mistakes as learning experiences. Leaders also stay prepared to meet whatever challenges may confront them. They plan projects and break them down into achievable steps, creating opportunities for small wins.

The commitments of leaders to Challenge the Process involve

- **Searching for opportunities** by seeking innovative ways to change, grow, and improve
- **Experimenting and taking risks** by constantly generating small wins and learning from mistakes

Allison Avon told us that the idea of Challenging the Process took on real meaning for her when she was in charge of her school’s annual Charity Fashion Show. The school typically raised funds to buy toys for the children at a local Head Start program. For various reasons the program administrators didn’t want the school to buy the children toys, and “we couldn’t convince them otherwise.” Everyone was pretty discouraged and wanted to cancel the fashion show.

Allison wasn't ready to give up, so she asked everyone for their ideas and what alternatives they could imagine. As a result they decided, "Perhaps if we bought the children educational items such as books instead of toys, then maybe the Head Start program administrators would be more receptive." In the end the fashion show and their day with the children—sharing and reading books together—were great successes. As Allison reported: "The results were better than we could have hoped for. This process of trial and error gave me a new perspective on what is required of a successful leader. When the process challenges you," Allison reports, "challenge back."



Enable Others to Act

Leaders infuse people with energy and confidence, developing relationships based on mutual trust. They stress collaborative goals. They actively involve others in planning, giving them sufficient discretion to make their own decisions. Leaders ensure that people feel strong and capable.

The commitments leaders make to Enable Others to Act involve

- **Fostering collaboration** by promoting cooperative goals and building trust
- **Strengthening others** by sharing power and discretion

With beads of sweat dripping down his face, Peter Freeman continued to attack the nails with his hammer. It was a blazing hot day in Harlan, Kentucky, and he and his classmates had to finish the roof by the end of the week; but it was already Thursday and the roof was not close to being finished. "As I looked around," said Peter, "I saw a group of kids who were unmotivated, tired, and hot." He began nailing again, thinking to himself, "We have got to finish this roof." He looked up again and saw another possibility: a group of highly motivated, energetic people who would work together to accomplish the task. It began to dawn on Peter that "merely working hard on my own would not allow us to reach the goal of finishing the roof in another day."

So he set out to enable those around him, reminding them of the purpose and urgency of their task and how important it was for them to work together as a team. "This brought about an amazing change," he reported, and "rejuvenated and reenergized, my friends attacked their work with vigor." Peter realized that he could not accomplish "my goals on my own without the help of a team." The key was to involve others in making key decisions and sharing ideas about how to best accomplish "OUR" goal. "I asked for their opinions," Peter explained, "finding out from them what they thought was the best way to go about things." In fact, before he realized it, others got excited and took on new responsibilities, making choices and acting like leaders themselves . . . and the job was done!



Encourage the Heart

Leaders encourage people to persist in their efforts by linking recognition with accomplishments and visibly recognizing contributions to the common vision. They express pride in the achievements of the group, letting others know that their efforts are appreciated. Leaders also find ways to celebrate milestones. They nurture a team spirit, which enables people to sustain continued efforts.

The commitments of leaders to Encourage the Heart involve

- **Recognizing contributions** by showing appreciation for individual excellence
- **Celebrating the values and victories** by creating a spirit of community

“Being a leader on my volleyball team,” Kirsten Cornell explained, “forced me to learn lessons about encouragement and put them into practice.” One of her main goals was to create a positive atmosphere on the team: “So I made sure that I recognized people for making good plays with gestures as simple as high-fives and words of praise (and my teammates got in the habit of doing the same).” As Kirsten put it: “I found that encouraging my teammates was one of the easiest and most beneficial thing I could do to make the team better.”

Kirsten said that part of creating an uplifting attitude on the team was letting the players know that she had confidence in them: “I showed my teammates with both words and actions that I believed in them. With words I would tell them that I knew they could make a perfect pass or get a great hit. With actions I showed them my belief in them in a tangible way by spreading out the sets between players so that everyone had a chance to get into the game.” Also critical, she said, was “taking an honest interest in each player. I got to know my teammates as both people and athletes. I knew the things they were dealing with outside of the thirty-foot square where we met to play, and this allowed me to realize when they needed extra encouragement and support.”

Finally, Kirsten created a culture of celebration by acknowledging accomplishments, however small they might have been, both on and off the court (for example, having birthday cards signed by everyone on the team). “This culture,” she explained, “caused us to have fun while we worked and to take pride in what we achieved together.”