



TRANSFORMING VISIONS INTO RESULTS

WHITE PAPER

Leadership from Present to Future

Analyzing, building and changing your leadership style



Introduction

Let's face it; few of us are actually born leaders. Most people need training and experience to develop critical leadership skills—and they often didn't receive that while perfecting their technical expertise. Thus, many managers find themselves in roles for which they've had little preparation; with very little thought to building a personal leadership style.

In this guide, we'll address three key areas to building a successful leadership style: identification, aspiration and direction.

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Identification



This information—how you are perceived and accepted by others—can open limitless career opportunities, or derail even the most talented people from reaching their leadership goals. In essence, it's about your attitude, character, and behavior when no one is looking, transcending other measuring sticks such as technical ability and emotional intelligence.

With these answers in hand, let's move to the next stage: **Aspiration**

Where You Are Now

Determining your existing leadership style is a critical step in starting to improve managerial and communication skills. Discovering your current style will help you become a purposeful leader—and avoid forcing yourself into a style that doesn't fit your personality.

Psychologist Kurt Lewin outlined three primary types of leaders in 1939—and decades later it still proves relevant:

- 1. Authoritative or autocratic.** These leaders have clear expectations, but there is a big gap between them and the people they lead. Their teams are seldom asked for input, thus this is not the most effective leadership style.
- 2. Delegative or laissez-faire.** These leaders provide little guidance to those they lead, something that often results in frustration. This is the least productive leadership style, because it doesn't address people's needs for predictability, consistency and accountability.
- 3. Participative or democratic.** These leaders provide plenty of guidance to those they lead, and they encourage participation in the decision-making process. While the leaders still have the final say, their team members are more engaged and motivated than those with less collaborative leaders.

Do you recognize yourself in any of these types? If you need more help identifying your current style, ask yourself and your trusted colleagues some of the following:

- Are you strategic or tactical? A big-picture person or someone who's more detail oriented?
- How do you relate to the world? Are you more introverted or extroverted?
- What is your hierarchy of needs? Is it important that people like you or would you rather wield power and influence?
- Are you comfortable making decisions? What motivates you?
- What do you want your legacy to be? How do you want to be remembered?
- How much power and influence do you have right now—and where would you like it to be?
- Are you comfortable as a mentor and coach?
- Do you focus more on outcome or process?
- Are you a visionary or someone who focuses on being agile to address current challenges?
- Are you proactive or reactive?

Aspiration

Where You Want to Be

Based on the identification stage, it's time to determine the type of leader your business needs. Aspiring to be a better leader includes perfecting the following three elements:

- Be fully aware and present
- Lead from the middle
- Communicate effectively

Being fully aware and present means having strong self-awareness, understanding how others see you, and realizing they start judging you the moment you enter the scene. It also includes successfully navigating the business culture—knowing what's normal and expected versus what's not well tolerated—as well as the official and unofficial hierarchies.

Leading from the middle means leveraging your power and influence through your interactions with peers and superiors, managing across, up, and down. Your success can hinge on the trusted relationships you make by being predictable, consistent and accountable; knowing technical expertise will only take you so far; developing mutual respect; aligning your goals; and being authentic.

Communicating effectively means knowing the importance of verbal and non-verbal communication. Only 7% of communication is accomplished with actual words; a far greater percentage is based on body language (55%) and vocal qualities like tone, pitch, and pace of delivery (38%).

Now you've determined your current leadership style and what you aspire to improve. Finally, it's time to create a path to positive behavior change.

Importance of nonverbal communication

Incorporating nonverbal communication skills is a critical element to a successful leader. Even if you consider yourself a good listener and delegator, fellow colleagues pick up on and react strongly to nonverbal cues. Some to consider are:

- Establishing 70% eye contact
- Smiling
- Using open gestures, i.e., palms up
- Sitting or standing erect
- Using a lower pitch
- Speaking slowly and distinctively
- Being aware of your entrance into a room
- Giving a solid handshake





How to Get There

Embarking on a behavior change plan should be accepted wholeheartedly. There's no surefire path to leadership success, but there are steps you can take to enhance your chances of being a leader who flourishes.

Here are the five steps you should take:

- 1.** Evaluate your readiness for change. While pulling your ideal leadership style from the previous stages, understand you may need to operate out of your comfort zone to get there. If you're not ready to stretch, you may need to revisit whether you're ready to change.
- 2.** Break down behavior that seems complex. Remember that all complex behavior is a bunch of simple behaviors combined, so drill down to separate your larger goal into "bite-sized" components. For instance, if you want to be more collaborative, you might schedule meetings with colleagues, focus on being more open-minded, and identify people who are collaborative and consider the behaviors required to be thought of as a collaborator.
- 3.** Just do it. Behavior is easier to change than feelings, so it makes sense to try a new approach and see what happens. In the best-case scenario, you get reinforcement, but in any case, you'll learn something that will help you down the line. You want to focus on completion rather than perfection.
- 4.** Shift your mental framework. Set a model for change by establishing SMART goals (specific, measureable, action-oriented, realistic, timely) and writing them down. It's been proven over and over again that when goals are written, they're more powerful and effective, as accountability rises.
- 5.** Assess your own motivations. Think about why you're making behavioral changes to enhance your leadership skills. For instance, if you want to be considered as a strong leader, think about the language you use. If you frequently use the phrase "I can't," reprogram yourself to use "I won't" instead. The former reflects weakness, while the latter represents a choice you've made.

As with all behavior modifications, the ultimate goal is to incorporate new, helpful behaviors into your leadership style.



About Dr. Denise P. Federer

Clinical psychologist and executive coach Dr. Denise P. Federer is the founder and principal of Federer Performance Management Group, LLC. She brings more than 20 years experience as a clinician, researcher, speaker, author and consultant to her work as a performance coach.

Dr. Federer, who received her B.A. in Psychology from the Honors Program at the University of Michigan and her PhD in clinical psychology from Nova University, is an expert in stress management, health and wellness, communication styles, performance enhancement and motivational strategies. She has extensive experience providing guidance to leading U.S. firms and their executives and in private practice as a psychotherapist to couples, families and individuals—an intense focus that has led to her interest and expertise in peak performance coaching and in the unique dynamics of closely held and family-owned businesses.

Dr. Federer is a member of the International Coaching Federation (ICF) as a credentialed Professional Certified Coach (PCC). She has also received certificates in Family Business Advising and Family Wealth Advising. Her professional affiliations over the past twenty four years include the following:

- National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology
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