

## Module No VII: Leadership Tips

### Structure

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- Conflict Management
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# Chapter 1

## Leadership Tips

### **A. Tips for Prioritizing Time**

Good leaders seem to always be able to “get things done.” The skill they have most likely mastered is the skill of prioritizing. Here’s a suggestion to help you improve in this area. Write out your “to do list” and then re- write it in the following order suggested by Steven Covey and then tackle that list!

- Important and urgent
- Important, but not urgent
- Urgent, but not important
- Not urgent and not important

### **B. Tips for Motivating Team Members**

People often drop out of your organization due to discrepancies in their understanding of the mission of the group, lack of appreciation, or poor leadership. Here are some suggestions to always keep in mind:

- Study members and determine what makes each one tick
- Be considerate
- Give credit where credit is due
- Show your members you have confidence in them and that you expect them to do their very best
- Ask members for their counsel and help
- Give courteous hearing to ideas from members
- If an idea is adopted, tell the originator why
- Give members a chance to take part in decisions, particularly those affecting them

### **C. Tips for finding need for Mediation**

Conflict is inherent when we work in teams. We all possess unique personalities, talents and skills. Thus we sometimes butt heads. Typically the root of conflict is mis-communication or a lack of communication. Our personal and leadership values also impact what we say and do in a team. Unresolved conflict can result in the need for mediation. The mediator can be the group leader, member, advisor, staff person etc. But, how do you know you need a mediator?

- When two people continually rehash the same issue.
- When the emotional level in the group or team is highly charged.
- When two people barely get along and their dislike of one another interferes with their work.
- When unresolved conflicts are affecting the progress of the group or team.

### **D. Tips for Conflict Management**

"What" to do if you are called to mediate a conflict among two parties in your group. Note the tips below:

- Clarify your role and establish ground rules (being honest and calm are a necessity).
- The mediator decides who will present their side first.
- Have each party present their side.
- The mediator asks if each side understands the other's perception of the problem.
- The mediator should ask each side to repeat what they heard from the other.  
The mediator should summarize the problem.
- Have both parties brainstorm solutions to the problem.
- The mediator can assist in suggesting more alternatives.
- Have the parties select and agree upon a course of action.
- Agree upon a date in which you can check in on their progress.

## **E. Tips for Goal Setting**

Goal setting is an important objective for every leader of a group or organization. Here are some tips on goal setting:

- Visualize what you want the desired outcome to be.
- Write goals down. It is important to put your goals on paper so you can see them, remember them, and refer to them.
- Identify the investments and sacrifices you will need to make in order to achieve your goals.
- Write down goals in the first person and present tense.
- Set smaller goals within the larger one. These will act as checkpoints along the way to success.
- Set target dates to help keep you committed to your time line and focused on your goals.
- Identify your support team (other staff, family, friends, etc.).
- Make sure that your goal is high enough to challenge you.
- Different people will have different goals depending on their own personalities and interests.
- Take action.
- Make your actions support your goal.
- Review and continually update you goals. It's OK to change your goals.
- Celebrate and reward your success!!

## **F. Tips for Delegation**

Delegation is one of the most important management skills. These logical rules and techniques will help you to delegate well. Good delegation saves you time, develops you people, grooms a successor, and motivates. Poor delegation will cause you frustration, demotivates and confuses the other person, and fails to achieve the task or purpose itself. So it's a management skill that's worth improving. Here are the simple steps to follow if you want to get delegation right, with different levels of delegation freedom that you can offer. A simple delegation rule is the acronym SMARTER. It's a quick checklist for proper delegation. Delegated tasks must be:

- Specific
- Measurable

- Agreed
- Realistic
- Time bound
- Ethical/Exciting/Enjoyable
- Recorded

## **G. Tips for Brainstorming**

No criticism, evaluation, judgment, or defense of ideas during the brainstorming session.

- No limit on "wild" ideas, no matter how outrageous or impractical they seem. Every idea is to be expressed.
- Quantity is more desirable than quality.
- "Piggybacking"- building on ideas - is encouraged.
- Everyone must be encouraged to participate.
- Record all ideas - i.e.: on a piece of flipchart paper.
- Choose "top 5 ideas" - combine similar ideas when appropriate.
- Individually rank ideas.
- Decide, as a group, which idea will be enacted first.
- Begin the brainstorming process again as necessary.

## **H. Tips for Projecting a Successful Leadership Image**

1. Remember that opinions are formed from what people "see" as well as what they "hear." Your attire sends a message about your agenda. When in doubt always ask what the attire is. (It can be very uncomfortable to arrive at a formal event dressed casually or vice versa).
2. When making appointments remember to leave your phone number in case the person you're seeing has a change of plans. Get the phone number of the person you're seeing in case your plans change. When you find that you can't keep an appointment always call and cancel or arrange to reschedule.
3. Don't make commitments that you can't keep. Follow through is important. It lets people know that you are responsible and dependable.

4. Do your homework! Always verify information before passing it on. (The passing of unverified information is called "spreading rumors")!
5. When you have received assistance from someone, it is important to acknowledge their help in the appropriate forum(s). A little "thank you" goes a long way.
6. Conduct a personal "attitude check". Are you helpful, pleasant, and positive? Remember, you set the campus climate.
7. Pick your battles. Identify the players. Be politically astute. Assess the consequences.

## **I. Tips for Dealing with Difficult Behaviours**

No matter where you work, you will encounter difficult people. Difficult people cause stress for those around them. You may be tempted to avoid these individuals and hope they will go away. It takes time and skill to deal with them, but once you know how to handle a difficult personality, you may gain that person's respect as well as the respect of your co-workers. Top professionals do not avoid difficult people and situations. They discover what the difficult person needs and try different techniques to skillfully handle the situation.

Communicating with "difficult" people requires patience, understanding and empathy. Most of us don't consider ourselves to be difficult people, but we all tend to react with difficult behaviors under certain circumstances. Illness and stress are two common triggers for negative reactions.

Some people get overly defensive when their efforts or work is criticized. Others will agree with everything on your face, and then later express their real feelings behind your back. Some individuals always think they are right and everyone else is wrong. When we encounter any of these behaviors, we tend to want to run the other way and avoid the situation.

By identifying key difficult behaviors, and by responding appropriately, you will be a much more effective communicator. People with difficult behaviors may not be getting their needs met. They may need to feel validated, understood, respected or recognized. Instead they feel frustrated. Look for opportunities with each of these

behaviors to understand the need and to truly understand their point of view. Park judgment and don't personalize.

There are seven difficult personality types. Each has unique annoying behaviors. These are:

*Aggressor*

*Egotist*

*Sneak*

*Victim*

*Negator*

*Super-agreeable*

*Unresponsive*

Although no one is totally Unresponsive or completely Negator, most difficult people demonstrate one trait more strongly than others. Learning the communication strategies for dealing with people who demonstrate a particular difficult trait can assist you in developing valuable coping skills.

### **Aggressors/Bulldozers**

They express themselves forcefully, are often angry, and need to vent. They also have a strong need to control. They are not able to appropriately handle their frustrations, but their attacks are usually not personal. They have a pattern of reacting harshly to certain stimuli when their need for validation goes unmet.

#### ***Tip***

Stay calm and be willing to hear them out. Let them vent as long as it's not abusive. Restate their concerns. After they calm down, ask for their input on some possible solutions.

Try to call the attacker by name: "Ashok, let me hear your side of the issue. I'd like to hear what is upsetting you." Using the person's name and speaking with understanding, can help move the conversation into the positive. Once he or she has a chance to vent and feel validated, attackers are often open to finding a resolution.

## **Egotists/Arrogant**

They are self-centered and think they know more than others. Some of them do have real expertise in their field or subject, but seem to lord it over others. They want acknowledgment and recognition for their expertise. However, they can also be intimidating and aggressive.

### ***Tip***

Egotists are generally experts in their field or subject. They want acknowledgment and recognition for their expertise. However, they can also be intimidating and aggressive. Since the Egotist likes to talk about what they know, if you are attentive, show them respect, and listen well, they usually calm down.

Acknowledge their expertise and let them shine when appropriate. Don't be intimidated by their condescending attitude or tone of voice.

## **Sneakers/Snipers**

Sneaks will take potshots, are often sarcastic, and want attention. They use sarcasm and use verbal barbs to put people down, often behind the scenes.

### ***Tip***

Confront them with direct questions and get them to express their opinions in a public forum. Find ways to use them for positive roles in team meetings, like being the recorder or timekeeper.

Use direct communication and comment on the issue. Don't react to any personal attacks or comments. You might say, "Vinod, do you have a different point of view?"

## **Victims/Cry-babies**

Victims see everything as negative. They complain, whine, and seem to be powerless, feeling pretty defeated from the beginning. They think that everything that happens to them is bad.

***Tip***

Have them list all the negatives then brainstorm solutions together. Encourage them to take small positive actions.

To meet their need for empathy, you might say: "I'd like to work with you to improve things. Could we try this together?"

**Negators**

Negators are negative and distrustful, especially of any authority figure. They are very stubborn and stuck in their narrow beliefs.

They are suspicious of authority figures and constantly criticize them. They think their way is the only way and reject others' ideas.

***Tip***

Ask them to express their criticism openly, rather than covertly. Seek input from other participants and practice group problem solving.

Try to stay positive, but realistic. Don't engage in an argument, but hear them out. Let them vent so you meet their need for respect and trust.

**Super-Agreeables**

Super-agreeable and Unresponsive people may be the most difficult behaviors to communicate with because they tend to be passive-aggressive. The Super-agreeable might appear friendly and approachable, but with a very strong need to be liked, they can act out in destructive ways to meet their need. They hate to say "no," tending to over promise and under deliver. Their strong need to be liked makes them a "yes" person. They don't know when to say no or voice an opposing thought.

### *Tip*

Be careful what you delegate to them. Make sure they have enough time and resources. Ask them to give a positive and a negative when you ask their opinion about an issue. Be careful to get very clear agreements with them. Show personal interest to help build trust.

### **Unresponsive/Withdrawns**

Unresponsives keep to themselves and seldom express their feelings or thoughts. They avoid participation and teamwork.

### *Tip*

Unresponsives need to be drawn out and feel included. When you delegate to them, follow up with lots of face-to-face brief meetings. Ask them questions that cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” Try to pair them up with others on projects or encourage teamwork.

Be patient and learn to ask the right questions. Don't be tempted to finish their thoughts. Just wait in silence. Give them time to prepare their answers or solutions. Don't expect them to react on the spot.

Write the strategies on post-it notes or cards. Review the appropriate strategy before meeting with a difficult person. Practice patience and empathy. Keep in mind that you may not know the whole story and some behaviors may be long standing patterns that are slow to change. You may need to consider using some professional coaching, teamwork or facilitated mediation.

## **J. Tips for Dealing with Difficult Situations**

True professionals learn to keep calm especially in stressful, difficult situations. When others know they can count on you to get through the tough stuff, their opinion of you soars. Learn tips to handle the pressure and avoid the pitfalls such as office gossip and ego battles. Know when to assert yourself proactively and when to let go.

## *Tips*

- Stay calm and assume the best intentions.
- Concentrate on facts, not opinions.
- Interpret what the speaker is “saying” with body language, such as eye contact, tone of voice, facial expression, and posture.
- Monitor your own nonverbal communication and be aware of the messages you are sending with your body language.
- Try to put yourself in the speaker’s shoes. Identify what he or she wants and allow the person to vent.
- Harmonize with the person’s stress (pain/emotions). Use empathy to absorb the tension.
- Paraphrase the person’s comments and ask questions.
- Don’t overreact, become defensive, interrupt, argue, criticize, tolerate verbal abuse, or cast blame.

## **Avoid Gossip and Backbiting**

It can be tempting to get caught up in office gossip and office politics. Most people want to feel included and part of the group, but be cautious about sharing personal information about yourself or others. Some of the information you share could be used against you in the future. Limit conversations to work-related or neutral topics. You should never discuss your salary or other confidential information with co-workers. People who avoid gossip and complaining are seen as more professional and are more likely to be trusted. Stay friendly and open and act appropriately.

## **Difficult Conflict**

A true professional knows how to handle and diffuse conflicts skillfully and picks battles carefully. Some issues are important to pursue and get resolved immediately. Other issues just need to be overlooked. Often, conflicts are related to people’s work styles. You may be a conscientious, perfectionist type, preferring quiet time to carefully think through your work. Someone in your work area may be a more social type, wanting to verbalize her thinking. Rather than seeing her style as “wrong,” try to view it as different from yours. Her behavior may annoy you because it interferes with your desire for

quiet, but she is not personally “out to get you.” Talk with her about style differences and needs. See if you can work out an agreement to allow for both quiet time and social time. Just becoming aware of your differences can ease the tension and help you both be more sensitive to each other’s needs.