

What is Leadership?

Leadership is neither innate or mysterious, it is the outcome of consistently applying key fundamental skills.

Leadership skills play a large role in career progression, work life balance and high performance. As the workplace becomes more collaborative, open and flexible leadership skills are crucial for your own success and the success of your team.

Leadership fundamentally is about how you show up on a daily basis. Whether your actions inspire others to reach beyond their comfort zone or merely reinforce their current barriers. Leadership is a choice that we make about our decisions and actions. We all have the ability to inspire and empower others, to be leaders.

There are many different types and styles of leadership depending on who you are, what you value and where you naturally focus.

Leadership is not management. Good management is crucial in business and in life. We need managers to plan, monitor, coordinate and organise. But this is a very different role to Leadership. Managers communicate and regulate to ensure things are done in an efficient way. Leaders empower individuals to perform at their best in a way that is right for them.

There are many examples of excellent managers that are not leading their team or examples of leaders that have no title or people reporting to them.

What are the skills you need to develop to be successful as a leader?

There are 3 key Leadership skill sets or areas of leadership that will develop your leadership capability. 1. Leading yourself, 2. Leading with confidence and Presence, 3. Leading Others.

How well are you currently performing within each of these areas? Take the self-assessment quizzes to find out.

Leadership Skill Set 1. Leading yourself

- Great leadership starts with self-awareness, internal strength and performing at your best as an individual.
- These skills help you understand and relate to needs of others but more fundamentally they also mean that you are functioning at your best. It is impossible to develop others if you are in a state of distress or operating in survival mode.
- Understanding who you are as a leader, what you stand for and your leadership style is a powerful start to your development, meaning that you have a language to communicate and inspire others.

There are six key skills in this area of leadership:

1. Who am I as a leader?
2. Consistency- Reframing and managing stress
3. Resiliency
4. Attention and intention
5. Focus
6. Boundaries

1. Who am I as a leader?

This skill is about understanding who you are as a person. Owning your strengths, talents and vulnerabilities. Being acutely aware of what you uniquely bring to the table when you are part of a discussion or how your presence affect others in the room.

Understanding who you are as a leader means that you can move forward with your development. We are often told by society and in the work environment to work on vulnerabilities but is impossible to do this if we don't have ownership of our strengths and vice versa.

Understanding who you are as a Leader is being able to communicate your Leadership style. It is understanding what you need to thrive and having strategies that you can put in place when you get knocked off your stride. What do you need to action on a daily basis to communicate to others and yourself who you are as a person and as a leader?

2. Consistency in Leadership.

One of the key drivers of consistency in leadership is how you frame and relate stress. This is a key skill that can be developed by understanding your emotions in the moment and have effective strategies to relax your body and mind.

Consistency is also driven by focus and attention, and ensuring that you follow through 100% of the time

3. Resiliency.

Resiliency is about how well you cope with tension and change. It is about your ability to re-orientate around adversity and sustain good health despite constant pressure.

Development in this skill set requires paying attention to your physical health, current habits and practices and introducing more effective modes of operating both in and outside of work.

4. Attention and Intention

How well you do give your full attention to what is in front of you at work and at home? This question will define how you are currently doing in this skill area.

In order to pay attention to what is in front of us we need to take the time to reflect and create intentions. These two skills go hand in hand. It is impossible to do one effectively without the other. In periods of stress and pressure these two skills become critical to your effectiveness as a leader.

5. Focus

We all naturally focus on some things and don't see or ignore others. Do you know where your focus is and what you are failing to pay attention to?

Focus is a crucial skill that we can develop to ensure that we are performing at our best and we are paying attention to the right things. It is true that what ever we pay attention to will grow in our lives. What are you paying attention to?

6. Holding strong Boundaries

Boundaries are what keep us safe. They define what are the permissible ways for others to interact with us and behaviour that we will not tolerate.

It is a leader's role to protect and keep other's safe but it is impossible to do this if we are not able to do this for ourselves first. The analogy of putting on your oxygen mask first before helping others to do the same.

Boundaries, defining what behaviour is unacceptable, is the first step in creating culture.

Leadership Skill set 2. Leadership Presence

- The next step on your leadership journey is Leadership Presence. We talk about confidence and presence as if they were natural attributes that you either have or don't. However both are crucial leadership skills that anyone can develop.
- Confidence is crucial in leadership as it give us the ability to make and commit to decisions, have faith in our own ability and create momentum in our leadership, career and life. Having leadership presence means that others will sit up and listen to our vision, ideas and what we have to say.
- The truth is we simply do not listen or respect others who are unsure of themselves or lack confidence.

- We all know when we are with someone with strong presence. It is like a magical quality they possess that draws people in which is why it is such an important skill to nurture.
- Leadership Presence is the ability to be fully present, inclusive of others and express authority and approachability through our actions.

There are six key skills in this area of leadership:

1. Inclusiveness- deferring to others
2. Momentum
3. Comfort zone
4. Listening- Understanding it's not your job to provide the answers
5. Being present
6. Authority and Approachability

1. Expressing Inclusiveness

This leadership skill is the practice of acknowledging others and making them feel valued and part of something larger than themselves. This requires confidence and a practice of putting attention on others rather than our own fears and anxieties

2. Creating Momentum

When we have momentum, we feel confident and powerful. Our future path or direction seems clear and we have faith in our ability to get there. Momentum unfortunately comes and goes in our careers and life. This skill is about understanding what drives momentum so that you have the ability to create and sustain it in your leadership.

3. Expanding your Comfort zone

All successful leaders have larger than average comfort zones. Expanding your comfort zone is a practice which will help to develop your leadership confidence and presence.

4. Asking the right questions

A common mistake in leadership is assuming that it is your job to have all the answers. As we become more confident, we realise it is far more effective to ask the right questions. It is the questions not the answers that drive performance.

5. Being present

When we lack confidence, we put our focus on the past or the future. We think of all possible outcomes and how others may or may not feel about us.

When we are present, we feel more confident, our attention is on the situation that is evolving in front of us. We have positive energy, and we will naturally draw people to us.

6. Authority and Approachability.

As a leader it is important for others to feel they can approach and confide in us. At the same time, we need for others respect and have confidence in our words and actions.

Being able to display authority and approachability simultaneously is an important leadership skill.

Leadership Skill Set 3. Leading Others

- The final set of skills needed to develop your leadership capability is empowering others to find their own solutions, perform at their best and make positive change in their lives.
- Leading others involves understanding how to shape behaviour through engaging and harnessing the motivation of others rather than through deciding, directing or controlling.
- The development of the performance of others requires an ability to meet individuals where they are at, to listen with questions rather than provide answers, to be versatile in your approach and understand what different individuals need.
- It's about having effective performance conversations, being consistent and creating clarity over mutual expectations.
- It is the skill of holding others to account and creating a respectful and safe environment for others to flourish.

There are six key skills in this area of leadership:

1. Shaping behaviour
2. Operational Feedback and performance conversations
3. Expectations and accountability
4. Developing workplace Respect and Culture
5. Trust and creating a safe work environment
6. Being Intentional

1. Shaping behaviour

A focus on the behaviour that you want to see from others rather than the action / behaviours that you are wanting to change. Breaking down

development and performance into progressive positive steps. Understanding the importance and how to acknowledge each progressive step.

2. Operational Feedback and Performance conversations

Understanding the importance of regular performance conversations, how to structure them, what to include and how this type of conversation is different to operational feedback.

3. Expectations and Accountability

These skills go hand in hand. It is difficult to hold someone else accountable if you have not first created adequate mutual expectations.

Understanding how to navigate an accountability conversation is a leadership skill that you can develop.

4. Trust and creating a safe work environment

Trust is an essential skill in leading others. Trust is the glue that sticks relationships together, without it your impact as a leader is minimal.

Individuals perform at a higher level, are more engaged and are willing to work outside their comfort zone when they are working in a high trust environment.

5. Respect and Culture

Creating guidelines for respectful workplace behaviour where others feel safe, protected and valued for their contribution. Understanding how you create specific environments and atmospheres within the workplace so others can perform at their best.

6. Being intentional about how you are moving forward

Being intentional about your actions is a skill that we need to continually practice as leaders. Without this skill we are reactive in how we approach situations rather than proactive.

Being intentional allows us to create and communicate a vision for the future and fully face situations. This skill facilitates others to be authentic in themselves, focused and happier in their approach.