

12 lessons in Leadership

By Christina Foxwell

Over twelve months we have been working to calibrate leadership lessons that when considered, could shift your performance and legacy to the next gear, help your people be more successful and ultimately impact your business outcomes. Why not check these off and reflect on what you can own, implement or challenge in yourself. Free yourself to be the best leader you can be this is in your control.

1 Leadership is a choice – it starts with you.

This seems "simple"- yet it is the most vulnerable discipline for leaders in today's world. It means you choose to lead yourself first, that even though you don't feel like it you lead versus simply manage. That you don't just use logic, fact and figures you connect with your emotional side and are willing to be open with your people so that they can 'see you'. This means working on your character and building connection with others.

2. Stay out of judgment – engage empathy and feedback.

Ok this lesson is hard because we do judge others. As leaders, we can easily get frustrated with our people, peers and even the leaders that we follow. Here is simple realisation around what judgement is. When we judge we are disconnecting from that person, we experience a sense of shame or even fear in their behaviour because what they are doing, saying and representing. We don't want to experience this for ourselves or even feel with them, so we judge. Judgment has so many lenses

based on motivators, values and past experiences. The key is to make sure when we feel judgement we need to stop and take accountability. We need to reconsider the lens we have and see perspective. This lesson is hard yet once again it's the lesson of humanity and accountability.

3. Be Accountable first – don't

blame. Leadership in high performance is very definitely taking accountability first. We all have an impact on the challenges we face with our people and in our organisation's success. What is yours? The real gift of accountability is to know that each action or in-action has a reaction. When you don't address a challenge with perspective and understanding the outcome belongs to you. Be accountable for your impact, your decision making, your leadership, your stakeholder management, your people, your business. Stay out of blame it's the only way to take accountability.

4. Lead authentically – people will follow you because of who you are.

Leading authentically means we allow people to see our "hearts" this actually means we are comfortable letting our character 'shine' and we operate in openness. Our Character is being open with our intent and showing our integrity. If we are human how often do we have things in our character that need to be worked on, owned and grown? Building our Character is a personal growth choice that will impact life far beyond the role we are working in.



5. Be Vulnerable – it's the foundation to connecting. I know there are some of you who are reading this thinking what are they talking about? Be Vulnerable – that is weakness!! Actually, the vulnerability in its most pure form is freedom and strength. That when we are truly able to be vulnerable, we let go of our need to control we face our shame and fears and we can hear, see and simply be! The research says that when we are truly leading with vulnerability, we are more agile, we can lead and work through change and we can innovate. That's the leader we need now and in the future. This leader does not need to lead people, simply lead yourself and will see how they can influence and engage others toward success.

6. Your people should be your priority – do you make time for them? If organisations have people, and people deliver outcomes why don't we prioritise time with our people? We expect them to deliver outcomes, engage our customers, create high performance, be part of a high performing team yet we don't spend time with them. What do we do at this time you might ask? Why not connect, understand their purpose, set measure of success, align focus and success indicators, coach, challenge, support and actually how them who you are and why it's all important. When you prioritise your people, you start creating momentum, your team build their success, they understand what you need from them, they deliver, and you have more time to focus on strategy and growth.

7. Be the leader you would follow. I love this idea; would you follow you? If you were being led by someone with your leadership impact would you be successful? If the answer is no, what could you do to be the leader that you would like to follow? This is part of growing your character and measuring your impact. Why not practice a few minutes to reflect and own one or two things that you know you do that you should not be doing?

8. Avoid gossip. I know this one is hard to because it has to do with our frustration and finding those that agree with how we feel – which means we are not alone. We know that we actually feel a sense of joy when we belong, creating this circle of belonging can be toxic not only for yourself, for your team and for the person you are gossiping about. The challenge with "triangulation" or gossip is that we fuel the problem, we grow discomfort, nurture pain, build a hotel of shame and check in for a long holiday. The challenge is when we are in this place, we spend most of our time caught up in the things we can't change. How do we get out of it? We choose to find perspective through empathy, we choose to not immediately call our team member when something bad happens to discuss it, we choose to find perspective, we choose to provide feedback and understand various "truths" finally we choose to let it go in our hearts. If we don't do this, we become bitter and angry because we are actually caught in a frustrating victim pit. Get out, it's the only way to lead.

9. Be Empathetic – it helps with feedback and fosters connection. Empathy is the heart of leadership. It does not mean we allow others to get away with bad behaviour or makes us soft. Actually, practising empathy allows us to see perspective before we judge, it allows us to consider the emotions others are experiencing and understand, it allows us the opportunity to share our perspective and truth in order to get them unstuck. In this way, we are able to influence, align, create a common understanding, find solutions etc. What empathy does it helps me you understand others, create safety and build relationships?



10. Don't lead from authority - you take away people's rights!

When we lead from a place of position or 'authority' we don't win people. We build a fear culture that means people need to do what we say in order to keep their job. A fear-based culture is toxic for long-term success. In actual the culture, you create is one of resentment, minimal effort, blame and a lack of accountability. The worst impact is the lack of positive team effort, problem-solving and sustainable effort. What does it look like when you lead from authority? You are in control, you tell people what to do and they need to do it or face the shame of raised voices, shouting, ineffective performance management and so much more. We can all fall into this trap. My recommendation is a move to the next level of leadership which is based on relationships and connection. That will give you the right to stretch, challenge and build high performance.

11. Create a safe environment – avoid shame and fear.

Shaming is the worst leadership approach we can use. We know that people will do anything not to be seen as unworthy, failing, the worst etc. How many times do we see this in organisations? I have been a sales leader and I love measurement, ownership and accountability. Based on shame and the research we have seen with organisations over the last year, celebrate your winners, leader-board your team, create team success, build confidence in your people. Avoid creating shame for your people that will produce prickly ineffective vulnerability which ultimately will create a toxic environment. Create accountability through ownership, success, challenge, growth and common purpose.

12. Build leaders – create momentum

The greatest gift you can give your people from a leadership perspective is to build leaders. Leaders own their impact, they take accountability, they know their gifts and live their strengths, they find solutions for problems. Leaders stay out of the blame game. They work on themselves. They take time to build personal resilience. They practice mindfulness and find ways to hear those around them. They relentlessly work on their character and their competence. They choose to be more, not for themselves, they choose this in order to make a difference to those around them.

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