

PART **1**
How I Can Lead

*A selection of
Leadership Essays
covering different aspects
of the leadership process.*

*Enlightened leadership is service,
not selfishness.*

JOHN HEIDER

CHAPTER 1

What is Personal Leadership?

Leadership is an active, living process. It is rooted in character, forged by experience, and communicated by example.

Management theorists posit many views of leadership. But many overlook the need for personal leadership, which I define as self-confidence backed by conviction and understanding. Another term might be “personal mastery”—knowing where you stand, where you want to go, and what you need to sacrifice to get there. Whatever you call it, personal leadership stems from one’s core beliefs and values and is essential to leading others.

Here are some examples of personal leadership:

- Leadership is a young woman just beginning her career who spots a problem within her team, and takes it upon herself to correct it.
- Leadership is when the manager of one team approaches his counterpart in another and initiates a conversation about how the teams might cooperate to meet a common goal.
- Leadership is the manager who makes an effort to get to know his staff by holding occasional meetings with no agenda. He facilitates dialogue in order to solicit what’s on the minds of his direct reports.
- Leadership is a manager who takes the time to “teach” his people, new and old, the norms of his organization and his expectations of and for his people.

In each of these examples, the manager-leader demonstrates personal mastery; she does not wait to be told. She sizes up a situation and does what is necessary to help her people do the job, and contribute more effectively.

There is no “man on a white horse” in any of these examples. Just leaders grounded in common sense who know how to get the job done.

Effective management today is less and less about “managing,” i.e., administering. Effective management is about leadership, exerting personal initiative that stems from personal vision, a sense that “I know what needs to be done, and I will do it.” Effective management stems from core values that shape a personal leadership style.

What Personal Leadership Is *Not*

When defining a topic that can be as elusive as personal leadership, it can seem as daunting as swimming across a large lake. The topic is so broad and so deep that once you dive into it you can quickly get over your head flailing away at concepts that seem relevant academically, but irrelevant personally.

So let’s drain some of the water by declaring what leadership is not.

“Leadership is not hitting someone over the head,” Dwight Eisenhower once said. “That’s assault.”¹ Raising your voice and shouting does not engender respect. It may generate fear, but it does little to enhance personal dignity of the worker. Yet many managers in leadership positions like to rule by fear. How many times have you heard a manager say, “I need to yell. It’s the only way to get things done”? Sure, yelling might stimulate an employee to continue working, but it certainly will not encourage him to contribute anymore than the minimum effort. Shouting says, “I’m in charge, you’re not, so do what I say.”

Raising your voice is symptomatic of the traditional labor-management relationship, one that is based upon autocratic rule. It fosters a “do as you’re told” mentality. The manager sets the objective and the worker fulfills it without question. The command-and-control approach can work well for a centralized, growth market where high-volume production is required. But when the market fractionalizes into many decentralized segments, the command-and-control model becomes an obstacle because it does not permit ideas to flow from any other source but the top.

In today’s economy we have many hundreds of multi-segment markets, each with its own competing demands. Therefore, we need a new model of management, one that encourages participation. Why? Because in a market with competing needs, it is the person on the front lines who often knows more about the customer and his needs than some executive sitting in a central office. If the company is to survive, it must encourage ideas that flow upward as well as downward.

The concept in many leading companies is empowerment, letting employees and workers determine their own objectives and thereby exert

a level of accountability in job design, execution, and fulfillment. Empowerment is another word for personal leadership, but a type of individual leadership that requires participation of both leader and follower. Both individuals must exert personal autonomy, initiative, and responsibility. [Unfortunately, the word “empowerment” has fallen from grace in certain companies because it was never practiced properly: managers did not cede any decision-making and employees felt ignored. As a result both managers and employees view it as a kind of “flavor of the month” that is past its due date.]

What Personal Leadership Is

Those three words—autonomy, initiative, and responsibility—form the essence of what personal leadership truly is.



Key Drivers of Personal Leadership

Autonomy is the willingness to lead others. It is a driving force behind leadership because autonomy is the inner drive that pushes a leader forward. For example, when Cincinnatus, the citizen-farmer of Rome, stepped forward to lead his people in time of need, he was answering the call of leadership. He was willing to assume command, to be autonomous. Similarly men and women in management positions aspire to move up the organizational ladder to assume more authority. They are exercising autonomy.

Initiative is the willingness to take action, to make something happen. Without initiative, there is inertia. A leader's responsibility is to move people, either physically or ideologically, so the leader herself must have an inner need to move, too. Some define this characteristic as being a "self-starter." The term is an apt one because it indicates a desire to create. Initiative also is the key motivator of the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs are those individuals who look for possibilities where others see closed doors. Initiative is the inner drive that says, "Yes, I can make it happen."

Responsibility is the willingness to be accountable for consequences. "Success has many fathers, but failure is an orphan" was a favorite saying of John F. Kennedy. So it is with responsibility. When a project exceeds expectations, it's easy to take credit. When the project tanks, it takes a measure of character to assume responsibility. Leadership is built upon responsibility; without it there is no leadership.

Autonomy, initiative, and responsibility work hand-in-glove to form the essential elements of personal leadership. These elements act as drivers of leadership transforming it from something that is to something that does.

How to Exert a Willingness to Lead

Personal leadership is first and foremost "personal." It stems from your beliefs. And here are a few traits that I have observed from leaders I know personally, as well as those I know by reputation.

Personal Leadership Is Centered

One cannot lead others if he does not know his own mind. Being centered implies having a sense of grounding. This grounding may come from education, from faith in God, or from family. Centeredness and knowing oneself gives a leader the confidence she needs to lead others.



The Leadership Process

Personal Leadership Is Outward

Leaders who know themselves can lead others. Leadership is the art and practice of moving people from one place to another. Most often the place is not a location, but an aspiration—a better place for body, mind, and spirit. As such it is directed outward and requires the participation of followers.

Personal Leadership Is Steeled By the Courage of Conviction

As with centeredness, courage is essential. All of us, at one time or another, must take a stand on uncomfortable issues. Where you stand can determine the course of a project, the future of a new application, or the direction of a new marketing initiative. It takes a strong person to impose his will and stick with it. Courage of conviction, however, is not to be confused with bull-headedness. A good leader knows the difference, or at least is wise enough to listen to trusted individuals who tell him so.

Personal Leadership Is Liberating

The leader who can look outward, yet is secure within himself, is freed himself from second-guessing himself. Often the most important service a leader can do is to delegate responsibility. A leader should be able to stand back and let her people do their jobs. Personal leadership liberates the individual and the team to fulfill their own potential.

Leadership by definition grows and expands with the individual. Leadership is a matter of taking personal responsibility for oneself, as well as collective responsibility for others, enabling everyone in the organization to grow and improve.



Ten Elements of Personal Leadership

Leadership is ultimately an active process. One leads, others follow. Leadership involves movement, going from one place, or state of being to another. It is about engaging the drivers of autonomy, initiative, and responsibility in ways to make things happen.

There are ten aspects to Personal Leadership:

1. Character
2. Vision
3. Strategy
4. Time Management
5. Communications
6. Recognition
7. Leadership Emotions
8. Change Leadership
9. Reflection
10. Supervision

Some of these aspects are directed inwardly toward the self; others are directed outwardly toward others. All of them, however, work together to create a cycle of leadership behaviors that nurtures the leadership process. Personal leadership is the process of doing and in the act of doing it creates a momentum that pulls others forward along with the leader.

Effective leadership works because the leader, as historian and leadership philosopher James MacGregor Burns has written, taps into the inner dreams and aspirations of the followers.² Good leadership encourages followership because good leadership affirms the follower's own personal values. Often what happens is the leader awakens the follower's own strong reserve of character and value. Some followers may not realize they hold such values until the right leader taps into them and mobilizes them to action. For example, followers of Martin Luther King felt better about themselves when they listened to his moving eloquence. But more importantly, King awakened within his followers a spirit of social justice, which gave them the courage to take up his cause despite great danger. [It must be acknowledged that evil leaders, such as Hitler or Stalin, can stir dark passions within their followers, too. It is a form of leadership, but it is one that calls for the subjugation of others and as such is inherently wrong.]

What This Book is About

The remaining chapters in Part One will demonstrate how you can develop your own personal leadership abilities in order to become a more effective leader.

Defining Leadership Character

Leadership character, which is the sum of strong morals as well as compassion, conviction and integrity, provides the leader with the strength to lead.

Creating a Leadership Vision

Vision is the sense of personal mission. Vision is the “Where do you want to go?” and “Why do you want to go there?” It frames a leader’s intentions and reasons for leadership.

Developing a Leadership Strategy

Strategy is the means of getting from here to there. It puts the vision into action. Strategy also serves as the personal “call to action.” When issued, strategy acts to marshal resources, internal and external, to fulfill the vision.

Maximizing Time to Lead

A leader’s most precious resource is time. If used correctly, time can be the enabler of greatness. It can permit the leader to achieve goals individually and collectively. But, like gold, it must be managed wisely.

Communicating Leadership

Communication is the glue that holds an organization together. Communication involves words, actions, thoughts, and deeds. Knitting these elements together is the willingness to listen to others.

Recognizing the Contributions of Others

No leader can accomplish goals alone. It requires followership. Those followers need to be recognized for their contributions. Recognition is the “pat on the back” that says you are doing a good job. It is an affirmation of individual and collective character.

Demonstrating Leadership Emotions

What we consider as intelligence is an amalgam of cognitive, affective, and social skills. Of these, the ability to know oneself as well as the ability to get along with others are essential to effective leadership. The leader who is balanced inside will be “well-balanced” outside, and thereby have the capacity to inspire confidence and trust.

Learning to be a Change Leader

Leaders are called upon to guide people through change. To do so effectively, the leader must anticipate, manage, and embrace change as well as commit to a continuous learning process in preparation for change.

Reflecting on Leadership

Leadership naturally invites criticism from others. It is the mark of a good leader to learn from mistakes. Part of the learning process involves a willingness to examine the inner self. We call it reflection. It is a process that those who practice is find indispensable to their ability to lead.

Supervising and Leading Others

Supervision is the leadership of others. It requires the application of virtually every leadership attribute and behavior. Supervision involves both the setting of expectations as well as the release of hands-on control. Bottom line, effective supervision is leadership in action.

Self-Assessment: Elements of Personal Leadership

Leadership is rooted in personal commitment and a desire to benefit others. Use this assessment to evaluate your opinions about personal leadership.

<i>Personal Leadership Assessment</i>					
1. Leaders lead by personal example.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2. Having a set of personal principles is important to leadership.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3. If do not know the answer to an important question, I am willing to search for an answer.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4. When something goes wrong, I look to make it right.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5. Knowing where you want to go is important to leadership.	①	②	③	④	⑤
6. I want to make those around me succeed.	①	②	③	④	⑤

1— *Strongly Disagree* 2— *Disagree* 3— *Neutral*
4— *Agree* 5— *Strongly Agree*

Rate Yourself

If you scored between...

- 26–30 Excellent leadership skills
- 25–20 Good leadership abilities
- 19–15 Learning to lead
- >15 Need improvement

Note: *If you evaluate yourself as you read each of the leadership chapters (1–11), you will develop an overall picture of yourself as a leader. If you re-take the same evaluations after you begin to practice some of the leadership behaviors noted in the book, you may notice real improvement in your assessment of your leadership skills.*

Action Planner: Planning to Lead

You can look at leadership as the art and practice of getting things done with the best intentions of your followers in mind. Take a moment to answer these questions. Jot down your answers. If you don't know the answer right away, come back and answer it later. The important thing is to reflect. From reflection, emerges perspective. And perspective is critical to leadership.

Reflective Questions

1. Consider the best teacher you ever had.
 - What were his/her qualities that made him/her a good teacher?

 - How did this teacher capture your attention?

 - What did this teacher do to make the material come alive?

2. Reflect on a leader in your personal experience.
 - What were his/her qualities that you admire most?

 - How did this person influence you?

 - What can you learn from this individual?

3. List some ways you can be more accountable.
 - To your peers

 - To your spouse

 - To your family

4. Consider ways you can demonstrate initiative.

- At work

- At home

5. Think about ways to assume more responsibility.

- At work

- At home

- In your community

6. Consider some ways you can begin to demonstrate personal leadership?

- At work

- At home