

SO YOU WANT TO BE A LEADER?

Do these 8 things...

Before you start it's okay to admit you're unmercifully critical of any "X Steps" advice when it comes to leadership. Undoubtedly, you've got an infinite supply of books and programs that identify the five characteristics or 10 traits of great leaders or claim to know the nine steps to effective leadership.

The fact is leadership is as much art as it is science. You've got to take in all this advice and shape your technique and practice to suit your style, personality and the ever-changing circumstances and conditions you face. Now that the disclaimer out of the way, here are eight strategies that will help you prepare for your first — or next leadership position.

BY JIM BOUCHARD





1

Work first on being a good follower...

Without exception, the best leaders you'll meet and work with are also terrific followers. Even more important, they understand that "leader" and "follower" are not fixed positions. They're interchangeable roles. Sometimes a subordinate has more skill, knowledge, experience or insight in a given situation. Can you step back and follow when necessary?

The practice of being a good follower also means committing yourself to the process of learning. What can you learn from the people around you? Above you? Below you?

2

Find the right master...

Expanding on the importance of learning — do you have a mentor? If not, get one. Now.

3

Commit yourself to personal and professional mastery...

Do you see a theme developing here? One of the greatest treasures taught by a sensei is this important lesson: "Perfection is not a destination. It's a never-ending process."

Mastery is not just a level of achievement. It's a perpetual commitment to the process of learning, growth and development. Start now and never stop.

4

Ask before you're asked. Act before you're asked...

This one can trigger a great deal of debate. You certainly don't want to step on toes or show disrespect to those who have more experience. However, the greater problem today is that too many people simply say, "Not my job." Or worse, "They don't pay me enough to..."

If you see something that needs doing, do it! And if you're not sure if you're staying in bounds — ask if you can do have a shot at it.



You've got to simplify complex ideas and problems.



5

Learn to deal with uncertainty...

Long ago, Pliny the Elder said, "The only certainty is uncertainty." Life is change. Our lives, our society and our business environment are changing at an unprecedented and ever-accelerating rate. No honest leader can tell you with certainty what's going to happen tomorrow.

One thing that never changes, however, is that the greatest opportunities come from the greatest uncertainty. Learn to be flexible, adaptable and comfortable with uncertainty and you'll be much better positioned to seize these opportunities where others run for cover.



Learn to talk and write good...

6

If you don't get the joke, you've got serious work to do.

You've got to simplify complex ideas and problems. You've got to express your mission clearly and help people understand decisions and strategies. Most of all, you've got to inspire people and unite them behind a strong and meaningful vision.

To do this, you must practice your communication skills — and stay up to date on new methods to deliver your message effectively.

This is one of the most important conversations you'll have as a new/promoted leader. The discussion centers on the fact your success as a leader is ultimately measured by one thing and one thing only — the success of the people you serve.

What's talked about here is “power” — your ability to get things done. Power only expands through sharing. You simply cannot do it alone — as much as some might try. If you want to do more — to be more powerful — make others powerful.

As a leader, you get things done when you inspire, empower and guide others. When they succeed, you succeed. And any failure is ultimately your failure as a leader.

No matter where you are in your leadership journey, the time to start practicing these strategies is right now. The more sincerely you embrace these strategies, the more likely it is that you'll be noticed by the people who can offer you your next leadership opportunity.

Remember Strategy #4. Act before you're asked.

What's stopping you? 🚫

Focus on experience over rewards...

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It's tempting and sometimes understandable to grab the short money. As with any investment, those who are willing to sacrifice immediate gratification usually enjoy exponential long-term rewards.

An opportunity to accept more leadership responsibility or meaningful leadership experience will pay much higher dividends over time.

Jim Bouchard is an internationally recognized speaker, Leadership Activist, and founder of The SENSEI LEADER Movement™. He's the author of eight leadership books and hosts "Walking the Walk," a podcast highlighting compassionate, engaged leaders from all areas of business, diverse cultures and experiences. Jim's programs are an inspirational and interactive exploration into the importance of human-centric leadership. To bring Jim to your organization or event, visit www.ArmstrongSpeakers.com.



Lead by sharing...

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It's often challenging to summarize leadership as succinctly as possible. Here it is...

“Leadership is sharing. A leader shares.”

The rest of the conversation is about exactly what leaders should share and how. And that can be a lengthy conversation!