

The Core Traits of Success for Today's Age



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Leading by Example

We'll start this off with one of the first things I share with new leaders, Lead by Example. Being a leader is a skill as well as a brand, with this in mind, it is important to approach your responsibilities as if everyone is watching. Your work efforts, your mindset, empathy, and processes are all being observed at this new level and they are going to be followed, for better or worse. So how do you make sure its the "for better" part? Lead by Example. The way you would want your team to work and interact should be reflected on your own day to day methods and actions. Of course, everyone can think of the basics of leading by example; being on time, meeting deadlines, being respectful and following through. Yes, do all of those, but in the case of a rising leader you may already be doing those, so let's go deeper.

When discussing this first change of mentality for new leaders, immediately I often hear about how they, the new leader, was successful doing their own practices which may have been done on the fly or purely improvised. An individual contributor can work this way purely off of their raw skill, however a leader has to think bigger picture, they have to think about the group as a whole. If you are able to spark up solutions instantly that is a fantastic skill, however for leading a team by example; you have to showcase your steps, your thought process, and demonstrate it in a way that can be duplicated by your team.

Often this comes with a shift of challenges being solved spontaneously on your own, towards defined processes and guides being created. If I know ambitious new leaders well, you still may be thinking that you can make it work on the fly. Check out this scenario with a lead technical trainer to help showcase how that thought usually plays out: After promoting an absolutely outstanding technical trainer to a manager role, we quickly saw some obstacles arise. This trainer, in a solo environment, was able to create content seemingly at will with an ability to present it instantly to any level of learners. When watching them in their courses, it felt like a magician at work, anything thrown at them from a student was tackled with ease and with thoroughness. As a manager myself, how could I not want to have this individual grow in the company and duplicate those skills through them with others?

The challenge came once a discussion occurred where this manager shared with me that they felt their new hires were falling behind expectations. After confirming the expectations were realistic we dove into the processes being followed. We discovered that the standard steps weren't being covered since this talented new leader had breezed through it during their own development. We chatted about shadowing (the process where a new teammate may observe an existing employee in a same role as a way of learning) and the manager stated how this was occurring regularly. However, the manager stated that they were unsure why the new teammates were not digesting the requirements. This caused even little tasks having to be completed by the leader since the new hires weren't confident enough to complete them. We spoke with the new hires and they shared how they were confused and overwhelmed with the pace and lack of structure. What they needed was clear instructions, hands-on exercises, and step-by-step processes to follow. The manager, having the pure talent to be successful with their own methods, had to change their approach and lead by example, something new to them.

Now that's all great, but how would you, and how did that new manager, pivot an approach and mentality? How do you grow and learn how to lead by example instead of just doing it because you have to?

Effective Communication

Getting into the habit of being the voice of your team is critical. This will show them how communication should be done and is expected on the team. Make sure your communication is clear and that everyone understands what's going on. If someone doesn't understand something, ask if they have any questions. When you are speaking with the team, if you assume something might not be clear, double check with them to be certain. Find an avenue of communication that fits the bulk of the team, but also custom ways for others who may struggle with specific venues of communication.

In our scenario with the manager of technical training they could have asked the learners along the way about how they are doing, if the pace and approach works, or how the new leader could provide more guidance. Asking these questions at all times will help you grow immensely and create a culture of open, effective communication.

Being Agile and Adaptable

If you looked into Digital Mindset you will see this is covered extensively. A positive way to lead by example is to openly welcome change as it comes and proactively brainstorm with the team on how you can make the most out of the upcoming alterations. Once again going to our situation above, the new manager could have adapted to the needs of their direct reports. Yes, communication is key, however follow through must be partnered with it to showcase your ability to be there to not only to help, but also change for the better as needed.

Agility is a trait that can be a fantastic motivator for others and one that is at the top of the list for any professional desired traits. Keep in mind, a team opposed to adapting and agility is normally a reflection of that manager's unwillingness to embrace change.

Accountability

A big step in leadership is taking accountability. Raising your hand and saying that a potential failure is your responsibility. Think about all the admired leaders, those who say they should have done more or jumped in the weeds to help, may go to the front of your thoughts. Having the ability to take the lows as well as highs is needed to be a success and someone who others would want to follow. In our real life scenario of the manager above, I was incredibly impressed that after hearing the feedback, they did not blame their new hires once. They owned the accountability, saying that they should have taken the needed steps to make sure they were providing the new hires with their best development path.

Run Faster

Now this is one I use with my teams a lot. Pushing yourself to be the best every day is something you did as an individual contributor, now a mindset shift is needed. Push yourself to be the best for your team is your priority. This means learning more, creating resources that your team can use, and being responsive for them at all working times. When you as a leader showcase this, your team will want to follow your success and will run faster themselves. Who doesn't want this as a leader?

Wrap Up

When you're leading by example, you're creating a better work environment for you and for your team. You're showing them what success looks like, and you're setting them up for success as well. A simple wrap up here, think of leading by example as being a professional role model. This is a giant mindset step in continuing to be a rising leader. Oh and that Manager of Training? They are a few titles up now and have a lot of employees following their clear instructions, hands-on exercises, and step-by-step processes.

Interested in having a conversation about Digital Mindset?

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