

Leadership Challenge

The **Leadership Challenge** (Kouzes & Posner, 1995) describes 5 specific principles that can make you an even better leader. If you would like more information or guidance on improving in any of these areas, please come to the **Office of Student Life**.

1 Challenging the Process

Challenge is the opportunity for greatness. Maintaining the status quo breeds mediocrity. Leadership is closely associated with change and innovation; the quest for change is an adventure and the training ground for leaders.

Leaders are experimenters. They find ways to get outside the imaginary boundaries of organizational convention. They take risks – and focus on mistakes as learning opportunities. Leaders seek and find challenging opportunities intrinsically rewarding; testing their abilities and looking for innovative ways to improve the organization.

Most innovations, however, do not spring directly from the leader. Leaders realize that good ideas come through the ears – not the mouth – and listen to the counsel of the people who use their services and products and the people who do the work.

Checklist for Challenging the Process

- Volunteer for a tough assignment. Be proactive in looking for chances to stretch yourself and learn something new.
- Identify a process in your group that is not working. Whatever it is, take action to fix it.
- Eliminate the phrase, “That’s the way we did it last year” from your discussions. Review annual projects and programs to improve, change or confirm how you are proceeding.
- Identify a couple of successful people on your campus or in your community who excel at taking risks and experimenting. Speak with them about what they think are the ingredients for innovation. Ask them how they get away with “breaking the rules.”

2 Inspiring a Shared Vision

Pioneering leaders rely on a compass and a dream, they look to the future with a sense of what is uniquely possible and passionately believe people working together can make a difference. Visions are the leader’s magnetic north; they find direction and purpose for the organization.

Visions seen only by the leader are insufficient to create organized movement. Leaders must enlist others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes and dreams, so that others clearly understand and accept the vision as their own.

Leaders breathe life into their visions with strong appeals and quiet persuasion, generating enthusiasm and excitement for the common vision. They envision a future full of possibilities.

Checklist for Inspiring a Shared Vision

- Envision yourself one year from now. How have you made a difference? Imagine that your organization has been named the outstanding group on campus. When you stand up at the award ceremony, what will you say about what you have done and why you did it?
- Meet with the people in your organization and ask them about their hopes and aspirations for what the organization could be accomplishing. Make those common goals visible.
- Make an intangible tangible. Slogans, theme songs, poetry, symbols, quotations, and humor are powerful tools that you can use to express the values and vision of your organization.
- Whenever possible, volunteer to stand in front of a group and speak, even if it is just to introduce someone or make an announcement.
- Use team-building activities to energize people on your team and to build interpersonal trust among participants through shared experiences.

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Enabling Others to Act

Leaders know that they cannot do it alone. It takes partners to get extraordinary things in an organization. Leaders create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. They build teams that feel like a family and make people feel like owners, not like hired hands.

Getting people to work together begins with creating cooperative goals and sustaining trusting relationships. Leaders understand how being trustworthy is the reciprocal of trusting others. They make sure that when they win, everyone wins.

Empowering others is essentially the process of turning followers into leaders themselves. The process of strengthening others is facilitated when people work on tasks that are critical to the organization's success, when they exercise discretion and autonomy in their efforts, when their accomplishments are visible and recognized by others, and when they are well connected to other people of influence and support.

Checklist for Enabling Others to Act

- ❑ Find ways to increase interaction among people in your organization who need to work more efficiently together (i.e., have a potluck dinner). Teamwork and trust can be built only when people can act informally as well as formally.
- ❑ For the next two weeks, commit to replacing the word "I" with "we". Leadership is a team effort, not an individual effort. "We" is an inclusive word that signals a commitment to teamwork and sharing. Use it liberally.
- ❑ Ask for volunteers. Give people choices. You build commitment when people don't feel forced into taking action. You build motivation when people feel like they are in control.
- ❑ Mentor new members in your organization. Pair experienced leaders with merging leaders.
- ❑ Make people visible by connecting them directly with your group's key stakeholders (such as faculty, administrators, alumni, parents, town officials, etc.). This way people know that others see them as playing important roles in the endeavor.

Modeling the Way

Being a role model requires clarity about personal values. Leaders have a philosophy – a set of high standards by which the organization is measured, a set of values about how others in the organization should be treated, and a set of principles that make the organization unique and distinctive. Leaders stand up for their beliefs and show by their own example how others ought to behave. Leaders build their credibility by maintaining consistency between their words and deeds.

Leaders get us started by convincing us that the impossible is possible and by taking the first step themselves. Breaking problems into manageable pieces keeps people's capacities from being overwhelmed. Planning small victories moves us off dead center. Small wins breed success and set the stage for building commitment to the new path.

Checklist for Modeling the Way

- ❑ Clarify your personal credo or motto – the values or principles that you believe should guide your leadership behavior. Then talk about your credo with others in your organization. Post this information prominently for everyone to see.
- ❑ Keep track of how you spend your time. Check to see whether your actions are consistent with what you and your colleagues have agreed is important. If you find inconsistencies, figure out what you need to do to align your actions with those values.
- ❑ Keep your daily planner at hand. Write down your promises as you make them. Review them daily and fulfill them on schedule.
- ❑ Develop a list of questions that you can ask at meetings to find out whether your team members are living out the team's values.
- ❑ Admit your mistakes. Say, "I don't know." Show that you're willing to change your mind when someone comes up with a better idea.

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5 Encouraging the Heart

Getting extraordinary things done in organizations is hard work. The climb to the summit is arduous and steep. Leaders encourage others to continue the quest. They give heart by visibly recognizing people’s contributions to the common vision. They express pride in the accomplishments of their teams. They make people feel like heroes by telling the rest of the organization about what individuals and the team have accomplished.

Leaders have high expectations both of themselves and of their constituents. They provide people with clear direction, substantial encouragement, personal attention, and meaningful feedback. Leaders make people feel like winners, and winning people like to continue raising the stakes!

Celebrating team accomplishments adds fun to hard work and reinforces team spirit. Celebrations increase people’s network of connections and promote information sharing. Fostering high quality interpersonal relationships enhances productivity along with both physical and psychological health.

Checklist for Encouraging the Heart

- Don’t wait until the whole project is finished to celebrate – plan a festive celebration for each small milestone your team reaches.
- Tell a public story about a person in your organization who has gone above and beyond.
- Ask your teammates to help design a reward and recognition system for your organization, being sure to include peers recognizing peers.
- Be creative about recognition and rewards. Try photographs, buttons, banners, ribbons, stuffed animals, painted rocks, special t-shirts, hats, etc. It’s usually the thought, not the gift.
- Say “thank you” when you appreciate something that someone has done.
- Create a “Hall of Fame” for your organization – an area (for example, bulletin board) in which you recognize all the people who’ve done extraordinary things.
- Ask people in your organization how and when they like to be recognized. Use this information for both individual-specific appreciation.

Action-Plan Worksheet

Review the checklists. Select one specific action you might add in order to become a more effective leader. Answer these questions, applying the five principles of the Leadership Challenge:

What would you like to do better? _____

What specific actions will you take? _____

What is the first action you will take? Who will be involved? When (target date) will you begin?

Complete this sentence: “I will know I have improved in this leadership skill when...” _____

When will you review your progress? _____

Source: Kouzes, J.M. & Posner, B.Z. (1995). *The leadership challenge: How to keep getting extraordinary things done in organizations* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

The Seven Cs of Social Change Leadership

The philosophy surrounding WHY you lead and where you take followers is arguably considered as *important as how* you lead. The following principles describe key elements in making a difference.

Consciousness of Self

Consciousness of self and others through self reflection means being aware of the values, emotions, attitudes, and beliefs that motivate one to take action, including how one understands others.

One who knows others is wise. One who knows oneself is enlightened.
- Lao-Tzu

Congruence

Congruency means thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity, and honesty toward others.

What I am is good enough if I can just be it.
- Carl Rogers

Commitment

Commitment implies intensity and duration. It requires a significant involvement and investment of one's self in the activity and its intended outcomes. It is the energy that drives the collective effort.

One can never consent to creep when one feels an impulse to soar.
- Helen Keller

Collaboration

Collaboration is the primary means of empowering others and self through trust. Collaboration can occur when one has trust in the diversity of multiple talents and perspectives of the group members and the power of that diversity to generate creative solutions and actions.

All of life is a collaboration. The destiny of men and women is to create a new world, to reveal a new life, to remember that there exists a frontier for everything except dreams. In history, there are not solitary dreamers - one dreamer breathes life into the next.
- Sebastiao Salgado

Common Purpose

Common purpose is to work with shared aims and values. It implies the ability to engage in the collective analysis of the issues at hand and the tasks to be undertaken. It requires that all members of the group participate actively in articulating the purpose and goals of the leadership development activity.

Tell me I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand.
- Chinese Proverb

Controversy with Civility

Controversy with civility recognizes two fundamental realities of any group effort: that differences in the viewpoint are inevitable and valuable, and that such differences must be aired openly but with civility.

Be calm in arguing: for fierceness makes error a fault, and truth discourtesy.
- George Herbert

Citizenship

Citizenship describes the process whereby the self is responsibly connected to the environment and the community. It acknowledges the interdependence of all involved in the leadership effort. Citizenship thus recognizes that effective democracy involves individual responsibility as well as individual rights.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.
- Margaret Mead

The seven values of the Social Change Model of Leadership development. (1995). In "A call for student leadership: Collaborative approaches for responsible change." Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California at Los Angeles.