The Principles 360-Degree Leaders Practice to Lead Up

Leading up is the 360-degree leader’s greatest challenge. Most leaders want to lead, not be led. But most leaders also want to have value added to them. If you take the approach of wanting to add value to those above you, you have the best chance of influencing them. Your underlying strategy should be to support your leader, add value to the organization, and distinguish yourself from the rest of the pack by doing your work with excellence. If you do these things consistently, then in time the leader above you may learn to trust you, rely on you, and look to you for advice. With each step, your influence will increase and you will have more and more opportunities to lead up.

**Lead Yourself Exceptionally Well**
Nothing will make a better impression on your leader than your ability to manage yourself. If your leader must continually expend energy managing you, then you will be perceived as someone who drains time and energy. If you manage yourself well, however, your boss will see you as someone who maximizes opportunities and leverages personal strengths. To become someone your leader turns to when the heat is on, manage your emotions, time, priorities, energy, thinking, words, and your personal life.

**Lighten Your Leader’s Load**
If you help lift the load, then you help your leader succeed. When the boss succeeds, the organization succeeds. Lifting shows you are a team player. It shows gratitude for being on the team and makes you part of something bigger. It also gets you noticed and increases your value and influence. How do you lift your leader’s load? Do your own job well first. When you find a problem, provide a solution. Tell leaders what they need to hear, not what they want to hear. Go the second mile and do more than is asked. Also, stand up or stand in for your leader whenever you can.

**Be Willing to Do What Others Won’t**
Successful people do the things that unsuccessful people are unwilling to do. Few things gain the appreciation of a top leader more quickly than an employee with a whatever-it-takes attitude. That means taking the tough jobs. You learn resiliency and tenacity during tough assignments, not easy ones. When tough choices have to be made and results are difficult to
achieve, leaders are forged. That means that you will have to sacrifice some personal goals for the sake of others. You will have to do something because it matters, not because it will get you noticed. Good leaders also find a way to succeed with people who are hard to work with by finding common ground and connecting with them.

**Do More Than Manage — Lead!**
To move beyond management to leadership, you need to broaden your mind-set and begin thinking like a leader. If you are already leading well, then use this as a checklist to see where you need to keep growing:
- Think longer term.
- See within the larger context of how something will impact those above and beside you.
- Push boundaries to find a better way.
- Emphasize intangibles such as morale, motivation, momentum, emotions, attitudes, atmosphere and timing.
- Rely on intuition. As Dr. Joyce Brothers says, “Trust your hunches. They’re usually based on facts filed away just below the conscious level.”
- Look for good people and invest in them to the point where they can be released and empowered to perform.
- Be an agent of change. Leaders want more than just to see progress — they want to make it happen.

**Invest in Relational Chemistry**
All good leadership is based on relationships. People won’t go along with you if they can’t get along with you. That’s true whether you are leading up, across or down. The key to developing chemistry with our leaders is to develop relationships with them by listening to their heartbeat to understand what makes them tick, knowing their priorities, catching their enthusiasm, supporting their vision, connecting with their interests, conforming to their personality, earning their trust, learning to work with their weaknesses, and respecting their family.

**Be Prepared Every Time You Take Your Leader’s Time**
For all leaders, time is precious. For that reason, you must always be prepared when you take any of your leader’s time. Whether you have unlimited access to your boss or you only get a few minutes on rare occasions, you need to think and plan ahead. Don’t make your boss think for you, and bring something to the table.
Know When to Push and When to Back Off
Successful leaders make the right move at the right moment with the right motive. Timing is critically important to leadership. When it comes to gaining influence with your boss, timing is equally important. It’s wise to wait for the right moment to speak up. A great idea at the wrong time will be received just the same as a bad idea. Of course, there are times when you must speak up, even if the timing doesn’t seem ideal. The trick is knowing which is which.

Become a Go-To Player
Few things elevate a person above his or her peers the way becoming a go-to player does. Everyone admires go-to players and looks to them when the heat is on — not only their leaders, but also their followers and peers. Go-to players produce when the pressure is on. They are the people who find a way to make things happen no matter what. If you adopt the positive tenacity of a go-to player and take every opportunity to make things happen, your leader will come to rely on you. If you have the willingness and the capacity to lift the load of your leaders when they need it, you will have influence with them.

Be Better Tomorrow Than You Are Today
Often, when people get to their desired destination, they stop striving to grow or improve. There’s certainly nothing wrong with the desire to progress in your career, but never try to “arrive.” Instead, intend your journey to be open-ended. Most people have no idea how far they can go in life. They aim way too low. The key to personal development is being more growth oriented than goal oriented. There is no downside to making growth your goal. If you keep learning, you will be better tomorrow than you are today, and that can do many things for you. ■
The Principles 360-Degree Leaders Practice to Lead Across

To succeed as a 360-degree leader who leads peer-to-peer, you have to work at giving your colleagues reasons to respect and follow you. You can do that by helping your peers win. If you can help them win, you will not only help the organization, but also yourself.

**Understand, Practice and Complete the Leadership Loop**
If you want to gain influence and credibility with people working alongside you, don’t try to take shortcuts or cheat the process. Instead, you have to show people that you care about them by taking an interest in them. Make an effort to get to know them as individuals. You should also strive to see others’ unique experiences and skills as resources and try to learn from them. When you go out of your way to add value to your peers, they understand that you really want them to win with no hidden agenda of your own. Affirm them by praising their strengths and acknowledging their accomplishments.

**Put Completing Fellow Leaders Ahead of Competing With Them**
In healthy working environments, there is both competition and teamwork. The issue is to know when each is appropriate. When it comes to your teammates, you want to compete in such a way that instead of competing with them, you are completing them. Winning at all costs will cost you when it comes to your peers. If your goal is to beat your peers, then you will never be able to lead across with them. How do you balance competing and completing? First, acknowledge your natural desire to compete and channel it in a positive way. Embrace healthy competition. The whole goal of healthy competition is to leverage it for the corporate win.

**Be a Friend**
We often consider ourselves to be many things to the people who work alongside us — co-workers, teammates, contributors, competitors — but we often forget to be the one thing that every person wants: a friend. Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “The glory of friendship is not in the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is in the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when he discovers that someone else believes in him and is willing to trust him.” A great approach
to friendship at work is to make it your goal to be a friend, not to find a friend. As you reach out to your co-workers, listen, find common ground not related to work, be available beyond business hours, have a sense of humor, and tell the truth when others don’t.

**Avoid Office Politics**
Playing politics is changing who you are or what you normally do to gain an advantage with whomever currently has power. In work environments, this may mean sucking up to the boss, constantly changing positions to get on the winning side, or using people for personal gain without regard for how it affects them. Political people are fickle and opportunistic, doing what’s expedient in the moment to win, regardless of what’s best for their peers, their employees or the organization. In the long run, integrity, consistency and productivity always pay off — in better teamwork and a clear conscience. To avoid office politics, avoid gossip; stay away from petty arguments; stand up for what’s right, not for what’s popular; look at all sides of the issue; don’t protect your turf; and say what you mean and mean what you say.

**Expand Your Circle of Acquaintances**
If you want to expand your influence, you have to expand your circle of acquaintances. Expanding your circle of acquaintances helps you improve, exposes you to new ideas, and prompts you to see things from a different point of view, which will help you generate new ideas of your own. It will help you to learn new working methods and pick up additional skills. And it will help you to become more innovative. Expanding your circle also expands your network, putting you into contact with more people and giving you potential access to their networks.

**Let the Best Idea Win**
Leaders in the middle of the organization who help to surface good ideas are creating what an organization needs most. They do that by producing synergy among their peers. And they will develop influence with their peers because when they are present, they make the whole team better. To generate good ideas, 360-degree leaders listen to all ideas and never settle for just one idea. They also look in unusual places for ideas. Don’t let the personality of someone with whom you work cause you to lose sight of the greater purpose, which is to add value to the team and advance the organization. If that means listening to the ideas of people with whom you
have no chemistry, or worse, a difficult history, so be it. A 360-degree leader protects creative people and their ideas.

**Don’t Pretend You’re Perfect**
Since nobody is perfect, we need to quit pretending. People who are real, who are genuine concerning their weaknesses as well as their strengths, draw others to them. They engender trust. They are approachable. And they are a breath of fresh air in an environment where others are scrambling to reach the top by trying to look good. To “get real,” admit your faults, ask for advice, worry less about what others think, be open to learning from others, and put away pride and pretense.
The Principles 360-Degree Leaders Practice to Lead Down

What makes 360-degree leaders unique — and so effective — is that they take the time and effort to earn influence with their followers just as they do with those over whom they have no authority. As a 360-degree leader, when you lead down, you are doing more than just getting people to do what you want. You are finding out who they are, helping them to discover and reach their potential, showing the way by becoming a model they can follow, helping them become a part of something bigger than they could create on their own, and rewarding them for being contributors on the team.

Walk Slowly Through the Halls
One of the best ways to stay connected to your people and keep track of how they are doing is to approach the task informally as you move among them. To connect with people, you travel at their speed. Express that you care and create a healthy balance of personal and professional interest. Professional interest shows that you have the desire to help them. That is something all good leaders share. Personal interest goes deeper — it shows your heart. When you take interest in your people as human beings, you need to be sure not to cross the line. There is a point at which interest becomes inappropriate.

See Everyone as a ‘10’
Three-hundred-and-sixty-degree leaders get more out of their people because they think more of their people. They respect and value them and, as a result, their people want to follow them. The positive, uplifting attitude that they bring to leadership creates a positive working environment where everyone on the team has a place and purpose, and where everyone shares in the win. To shine in this area, see people as they can become. Let them borrow your belief in them. Catch them doing something right. Give them the benefit of the doubt. And understand that people usually rise to the leader’s expectations. Begin today to see and lead people as they can be, not as they are, and you will be amazed by how they respond to you. Not only will your relationship with them improve and their productivity increase, but you also will help them rise to their potential.
**Develop Each Team Member as a Person**
There is much more to good leadership than just getting the job done. Getting the job done makes you a success. Getting the job done through others makes you a leader. But developing people while helping them get the job done at the highest level makes you an exceptional leader. In order to develop your staff, you need to keep growing yourself. Understand that development is a longterm process. Development is based on the needs of your people: You give them what they need in order to become better people. To do that well, you need to know people’s dreams and desires. Take responsibility for conforming your leadership style to what your people need, not expecting them to adapt to you. As a leader, your first responsibility is to help others define the reality of who they are. Sometimes that means having difficult conversations. The thing you need to remember is that people will work through difficult things if they believe you want to work with them.

**Place People in Their Strength Zones**
When employees are continually asked to perform in an area of weakness, they become demoralized, they are less productive, and they eventually burn out. Successful people find their own strength zones. Successful leaders find the strength zones of the people they lead. When you place individuals in their strength zones, you change people’s lives for the better, their jobs become rewarding and fulfilling, and you help both the organization and yourself. The ability to help people find the best place means discovering their true strengths, giving them the right job, identifying the skills that they’ll need, and providing world-class training.

**Model the Behavior You Desire**
Leaders set the tone and the pace for all the people working for them. Therefore, leaders need to be what they want to see. Your behavior determines the culture. Your attitude determines the atmosphere. Your values determine the decisions. If your decisions are not consistent with your values, they are always short-lived. Your investment determines the return. Your character determines the trust. Your work ethic determines the productivity. Your growth determines the potential. Followers become like their leaders. They are influenced by their leaders’ values. They adopt their working methods. They even emulate many of their quirks and habits. That’s why we must always be aware of our own conduct before criticizing the people who work for us. If you don’t like what your people are doing, first take a look at yourself.
**Transfer the Vision**
As a leader in the middle of the organization, you will be transferring what is primarily the vision of others. Leaders in the middle may not always be the inventors of the vision; they are almost always its interpreters. To interpret the vision in a way that fires up people and sets them off in the right direction, include the following elements: clarity; connection of past, present and future; purpose; goals; a challenge; stories that make the vision relational and warm; and passion. If there is no passion in the picture, then your vision isn’t transferable.

**Reward for Results**
Whatever actions leaders reward will be repeated. That is why it is very important to reward results and to do it the right way. To reward results most effectively, give praise publicly and privately, back up praise with money, don’t reward everyone the same, give perks beyond pay, promote when possible, and remember that you get what you pay for. ■