



The six essential pillars of great personal leadership

Before you become a great leader in the workplace, you must learn to lead yourself. Although it may not happen overnight, everybody has access to a vital reserve of untapped potential that can make all the difference to achieving their goals.

The journey begins with self-belief. In order to deliver the best results, you must first believe and accept that you're capable of achieving more. Without this confidence, it's difficult to develop your personal leadership abilities.

Before embarking on a journey of discovery, you must take the time to understand your current position in life and the actions you're taking. Once you have this information, it becomes much easier to plan your route and change the destination if necessary.

When it comes to achieving your objectives, goals and ambitions, Effective Personal Leadership is key. Without developing your leadership potential, it's difficult to succeed and achieve your long-term goals.

For some people, self-improvement comes from studying the words, actions and deeds of the world's greatest leaders, but looking at the 'outside' of a person does not capture their thoughts, habits and emotions – this is where true leadership resides.

Success doesn't happen by accident. Your future should never rely on luck or chance, so it's up to you to take personal responsibility of your actions.

To develop the self-motivation central to personal leadership, there are six essential skills that you must acquire first.

Personal Responsibility

Only you can take responsibility for your life. Personal responsibility is the foundation on which other successes are built.

Accepting responsibility for your own actions, decisions, attitudes, words and outcomes will allow you to grow into a leader.

Great leaders shape expected behaviours. Once you start accepting responsibility, your colleagues will look up to you and do the same, establishing a pattern for others to follow – this is effective leadership.

It's not healthy to relive past experiences or blame others for failure. By doing this, it shows you are trying to avoid personal responsibility, which will prevent you from enjoying true success when it comes.

Personal responsibility is the key to freedom. The power of choice is a talent that must be developed, as your decisions have consequences that could impact your future.

Just as a poor choice will lead to undesirable results, a wise choice brings favourable results. You must learn to take the good with the bad, cultivating your personality to determine future success.

The mental, emotional and physical environment you function in is a direct result of the decisions you make and the attitudes you develop.

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Purpose

The next step is to crystallise your thinking, taking the time to understand what you want to achieve and become.

Even conditioned habits are determined by your own free choice, so it's possible to reverse these and find an alternative route. Become goal driven and goal focused by clearly defining your objectives and persevering with them.

Over time, if you're still feeling dissatisfied with your progress then it could be because your goals are not clearly defined. Unless you have dreams and desires it's difficult to clarify your purpose, so keep aspiring for more.

Without a clear direction and purpose there is little meaning to life. Without meaning, people can become disorientated and demotivated.

This purpose should reflect your long-term goals and objectives, keeping your daily life aligned with your core strengths and values.

Once you understand yourself, your purpose will become clear. Only by establishing a wider cause can people truly find happiness.

Approaching life with a single purpose helps you make giant strides toward developing your personal leadership skills. It also implements a system of values which help you overcome conflicts.

Plan

Once you have a set of goals in mind, it's important to write these down along with realistic deadlines for when you want to achieve them. This will transform dreams into reality, eliminating confusion while establishing a strong emotional connection between yourself and the targets.

Written plans will help you stay on track, block out distractions, measure your progress and overcome procrastination.

Work out what you must do and when you must do it, as this will help you maintain a positive and motivated attitude, allowing you to complete the tasks ahead.

If you're not happy with the level of success you're currently experiencing, then there's a good chance you haven't properly identified and planned your goals.

For some people, selecting productive goals can take time, as personal development proceeds at different rates. It's up to you to make a conscious decision about what your goals should be and how you're going to achieve them.

Goal setting isn't a short-term practice either. It should become a routine of plan and action that defines your long-term future.

Therefore, it's crucial that you write your goals down, as they could become lost or confused amongst a new set of challenges that later appear.

“All men's miseries derive from not being able to sit quietly in a room alone.”

- Blaise Pascal

Passion

The difference between a goal and a wish comes from the passion you have. Recognise your own power and understand that actions create desire – only you can stir the passion within.

Through vivid imagination, concentration and belief, you can stimulate your emotional appetite and use your goals to create passion. Without this key ingredient your goals will likely remain unrealised.

Don't worry about making mistakes, as these can provide important learning opportunities. If you work hard at something and persevere with it, your desire to achieve goals and develop leadership skills will continue. Ultimately, your attitude will determine your success, as passionate workers have more belief in their actions.

Not only this, but passionate and positive individuals will attract likeminded people. Spiritual stamina and creativity rely upon this passion.

It goes without saying that passionate working will give you the momentum needed to reach your personal goals, giving you a greater sense of achievement once you reach the finish line.

Soon, this behaviour becomes habitual, a way of life and makes everything seem possible, no matter how difficult the journey may be.

Positive Expectancy

Understanding your current position and the steps that must be taken to reach your destination requires focussed thinking. Over time, this process will develop great self-confidence, as positive expectancy comes from experience and knowledge, which can only be gained through engagement.

Real experience comes from embracing new and unfamiliar situations, instead of shying away from the challenge. This practical experience will mean you're better equipped to overcome the obstacles ahead, the ones that stretch you to the limit of your abilities.

These experiences are the most effective way to build positive expectancy and personal leadership. Leaving your comfort zone and tackling problems that others won't is a great way to develop your skills.

Ultimately, positive expectancy stems from self-belief. By defining and outlining the goals you want to achieve, you can remove confusion from the situation and undertake each task effectively.

This belief will give you the power to concentrate and focus your thoughts. Once you emit positive beliefs, you'll find positive influences are drawn to you, leading to better results.

“If you are not making the progress you would like to make and are capable of making, it is simply because your goals are not clearly defined.”

- Paul J. Meyer

Persistence

Once you have a goal in mind, it's important that you aren't distracted or demotivated by other people and the comments they make. It's not a case of being stubborn, but too many people are held back by the thoughts and opinions of others.

A quiet and firm resolve will give you the confidence needed to follow through with your plans. Every time you encounter a new challenge, it's up to you whether you quit or keep pushing through.

The most common way people fail is by giving up. However, a true champion will have the dedication and willingness needed to carry on in the face of criticism, never allowing outside distractions to slow their progress.

If you want to succeed, then you'll stop at nothing short of complete commitment. Following through with persistence, you will remain faithful to your purpose, no matter how much time and effort it takes to get there.

While persistence cannot become intense without clearly defined goals, it's important to remember that success will not come overnight. Persistence requires patience and a tough mental attitude will help you stay on track.

Using the power inside

These six essential skills are inherent in every great leader, as they provide the foundations for an effective leadership plan.

Whilst you may already possess some of the skills, others require attention and must be nurtured. To arrive at your destination, you must access the power within, doing whatever it takes to develop essential leadership traits.

Every goal, plan or dream you have will be determined by how much you embrace these ideals and how strong your belief is.



Making a positive change

To remind yourself of the journey you're undertaking, whatever you plan to do over the coming weeks and months, ask yourself:

- Have I taken complete personal responsibility for my thoughts, actions and results?
- Have I focussed my thinking, so I know what I want to achieve and know where I currently stand?
- Have I written a detailed plan with a target date to achieve my objective?
- Do I have a burning passion to achieve my defined goal?
- Do I have positive expectancy in my abilities?
- Have I developed the persistence needed to carry on, despite what others might say or do?

If you can honestly answer yes to each of the questions, then you're well on your way to developing the essential qualities needed to be an effective leader of others.

This paper offers a broad overview of personal leadership and the related concepts. If you would like to discuss your personal journey in more detail, then get in touch for more information.

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