

How-To Build Strong Leadership Skills



Strong leadership is a learned skill. Depending on the type and size of business, there are always methods to improve. Whether you are a business owner, executive, or manager, it is important that you are always analyzing your team's response to your management.

The following methods could help you improve your leadership. Doing so can lead to happier and more productive employees.

Be a Positive Role Model

Do not expect your employees to work any harder than yourself. Employees often use management as criteria for their own work ethic. When you are working, think about how you would like your employees to act. If you are on Facebook every hour then you cannot get frustrated with employees who are constantly checking their social media notifications.

Find a Mentor

Nobody knows it all. Find a mentor who has also served as a business leader. You can seek tips and guidance from their experience.

Encourage Creativity

If employees are given the flexibility to use creative thinking, you may be surprised by the insight that they can bring to the table. Creative thinking can be intimidating for many employees. However, new ideas could be what makes your company unique among competition.

How to Influence Creative Thinking in the Workplace

- Use an “idea first, measurement second” mindset. Eventually your company must be data-driven but allow flexibility for new ideas.
- Use innovation teams to come up with new ideas.
- Reward employee with bonuses if their idea is used.
- Create a positive work environment so employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas without criticism.

Study Past Leaders

Most business leaders spend their time looking forward. Unfortunately, some of your most valuable lessons can be learned from the past. Study past leader’s successes and failures. After all, history repeats itself.

Great Modern Entrepreneurs to Learn From

1. Elon Musk
2. Steve Jobs
3. Oprah Winfrey
4. Walt Disney
5. Bill Gates

Be Humble

Great leaders admit their mistakes and share credit for successes. If you play the blame game, eventually your employees will look for employment elsewhere.

People want to feel respected.

Communicate Effectively

As a leader, you probably get very busy. Nevertheless, you cannot build a great team without maintaining time to communicate with your team.

Occasionally, ask your employees how they are doing. Your employees should feel comfortable confronting you with questions and concerns.

Strong leaders can build great companies. If you are in a leadership position, focus on improving your skills to help lead your company to success.

How-To Manage Stress at Work



If you have had a job, you probably experienced work-related stress. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 40% of workers report their job at “very or extremely stressful.” In these severe situations, a person’s lifestyle can become compromised. The following are a few common reasons why Americans experience stress at work:

- Low Salaries
- Excessive Workloads
- Few Opportunities for Growth or Advancement
- Lack of Social Support
- Work that is Not Engaging

- Conflicting Demands or Unclear Expectations

Do not let stress overwhelm you. Learn to manage your stress before it takes a toll on your life.

Take a Deep Breath

When stress chemicals overwhelm our body, we experience the “fight or flight” response. Breathing deeply relaxes your muscles and allows fresh air into your lungs that helps relax your body. Next time you feel stressed over a surprising email or overwhelming amount of projects, practice the deep breathing relaxation technique. You can practice deep breathing without even leaving your desk.

1. Sit comfortably with your back straight. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
2. Breathe in through your nose. The hand on your stomach should rise. The hand on your chest should move very little.
3. Exhale through your mouth, pushing out as much air as you can while contracting your abdominal muscles. The hand on your stomach should move in as you exhale, but your other hand should move very little.
4. Continue to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to inhale enough so that your lower abdomen rises and falls. Count slowly as you exhale.

Eliminate Interruptions

Interruptions can add hours to your work day. You may have blocked out time for an important task. However, if phone calls, emails, or co-workers interrupt your schedule, your task could take hours longer than planned. It’s important to find ways to prevent interruptions from disrupting your focus.

The first step is to plan for expected interruptions. Notify coworkers that you do not want to be disturbed within a certain time period. Turn off email notifications and send all phone calls to voicemail. Eliminating interruptions can help you get your work done faster and more thoroughly.

Eat Right and Sleep Well

I am sure you have heard of the phrase “stress eating” before. When we are stressed, we seek high fat, sugary, “comfort” foods. Often, these foods stress out our body chemistry leading to fatigue, trouble sleeping, weight gain, and other diseases.

While a sugar rush might be appealing after reading a nasty email, long-term rejuvenation derives from an early bedtime and tall glass of water.

Identify Self Imposed Stress

Many stresses can be alleviated from simple lifestyle changes. For example, focus on your level of self-confidence rather than seeking approval of others. Procrastination can also lead to high amounts of work stress. Make sure your perception of work is not tainting what your work actually is.

Prioritize Your Work

Most jobs encounter deadlines. Prioritizing your work can help you complete difficult projects. The Liquid Planner Blog explains how to efficiently prioritize your work. Follow these steps to start meeting your goals every day. Find more information within their article.

1. Collect a list of all your tasks
 2. Identify urgent vs. important
 3. Order tasks by estimated effort
 4. Be flexible and adaptable
 5. Know when to cut
 6. You do not have to live with chronic work stress. Managing your stress can help you enjoy daily life.
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The Difference Between a Bad Manager, Good Manager, and Great Manager



As a recruiter, I have seen many different types of management practices and the effects on the teams they lead. The type of manager can often determine the company's retention rate as management practices have a direct correlation with employee satisfaction. There are three types of management: a bad manager, good manager, and great manager.

“Bad managers tell employees what to do, good managers explain why they need to do it, but great managers involve people in decision making and improvement.”
- Mark Graban

If you are building your management skills, it is important to become aware of your management habits and work towards becoming a great manager.

Traits of a Bad Manager

A bad manager tells employees what to do without explaining why. A plan has already been created and the employee simply follows the steps to complete the project. The employee is ultimately a pawn.

When a company is operated by a bad manager, employees rarely have passion behind their work. Why would they? Their entire job is following orders. There is no room for creativity.

For example, a Document Control Manager might be told that they have to

transfer documents into a new system. The system has a learning curve and to the Document Control Manager, it seems like the old system did exactly the same task. A bad manager does not tell the employee why the office is switching programs, just to do it.

Traits of a Good Leader

A good manager gives orders but also explains why they are asking the employees to perform the task.

In terms of the Document Control Manager, the Quality Director would explain why the company is switching to a new program. While the program has a steep learning curve, the Document Control Manager understands that the new system will be helping the company.

Traits of a Great Manager

A great manager is hard to come by. Often, people avoid becoming a great manager because they feel like they are giving up control. In reality, the more you involve your employees with the decisions, the more they will feel dedicated to the company's mission and want to stay with the company long-term. It also greatly improves the employee's engagement in their job and the projects and greatly increases the likelihood of them going the extra mile when needed.

A great manager engages employees with decision making. They seek feedback, new ideas, and involve employees in brainstorming sessions and allow them to have some ownership in their part of the project.

The Quality Director would explain to the Document Control Manager why the company needs to switch systems, such as cost or accessibility for the people involved in creation the documents. The Quality Director would then ask the Document Control Manager to attempt the trial period and provide feedback. If the program does not seem efficient, the Document Control Manager and Quality Director will try to find a new program together.

If you are a manager, take the time to reflect on your work habit. Becoming a great manager can lead to employee happiness, retention, and company growth, not to mention that more engaged and happy employees are more productive and

easier to manage.

5 Methods to Building Long-Term Relationships with Clients



If you are a business owner then you probably have experienced the value of return customers. A return customer does not require massive amounts of marketing resources and can also serve as a referral source for more customers. The question is, how do you earn repeat sales with competition?

The following are a few tips to develop ongoing customer relationships:

Be A Useful Resource

Do not hesitate to share information that your client may find useful. The more value you offer, the more likely they will request your services.

Keep in mind why customers are working with you and what services you can provide to help them reach their goals. You can serve as an expert resource of information with a weekly blog on your company's website.

Always Meet Your Deadline

Do you have a friend that is always late? It gets annoying. Eventually, you may

even stop inviting them to events.

If you do not meet deadlines, your clients will be just as annoyed with you as the late friend. You are showing that you do not appreciate their time. Commit to your deadline.

Make Them Feel Special

Business growth can occur quickly. One day, you are posting fliers on bulletin boards wondering if this is all a waste of time.

Ten years later, you realize that every hour in your day is booked. At this point, your clients are probably not getting individual attention UNLESS you have planned for this growth. Your customers will probably switch to the provider who is more attentive to their needs. Make your customer feel special to avoid this problem.

Valuable Methods to Make Your Clients Feel Special

- Make time to meet with your clients in person rather than only over the phone.
- Send your customer a note or discount on their birthday.
- Thank them for their purchase and show appreciation.
- Remember them.
- Make adjustments based on their feedback.

Provide Value

If you provide value to your company then customers are likely to be loyal to your brand. To build brand loyalty, you need to consider what makes your company different.

Why should a customer be loyal to your product or service?

What are you providing that is unique to your niche?

Inc magazine provides a five-step system on providing value to customers.

Inc Magazine's Method to Providing Value for Customers

Step One: Understand What Drives Your Customers

Step Two: Understand Your Value Proposition

Step Three: Identify the Customers and Segments Where You Can Create More Value Relative to Competitors

Step Four: Create a Win-Win Price

Step Five: Focus Investments on Your Most Valuable Customers

Respond to Every Concern

Communication is key for healthy relationships. A business relationship is not different. Do not ignore your customer's concerns, complaints, or questions. In fact, all customer complaints should be responded to within 24 hours.

There are many review sites that allow you to collect reviews and respond to customer's complaints, such as Yelp, Facebook, and Google+. Each provide a discussion board for positive and negative experiences. Make sure you are replying to comments.

Return customers can create reliable income for your company. Invest in your relationships to build brand loyalty that ensures that you stay in business.

5 Rewarding Team Building Exercises for an Evolving Company



Every business owner strives for a workplace where their team members work together positively. However, building unity within the workplace requires time and effort. Incorporate team building exercises to help employees adjust to an evolving company.

The following are a few fun team building activities for the workplace:

Provide a Comfortable Break Room with Snacks and Beverages

Everyone needs to get away from their desk during the day. A comfortable break room offers your employees a place to rejuvenate or eat lunch. Inevitably, the break room often becomes a gathering place where employees build community.

Creating a comfortable break room takes little effort. Maintain a few snacks, such as granola bars or fresh fruit, as well as coffee and other work appropriate beverages.

Sponsor Job Shadowing Opportunities for Employees in a Different Position

New employees are often attracted to their job position due to the opportunity for growth. Use job shadowing as an opportunity to introduce the employee to the position while meeting others in the department. Job shadowing is easy to manage with little costs. Job shadowing is essential if an employee is considering transitioning to a new position.

What to Include in Job Shadow

1. Participate in Brainstorming Session
2. Attend a Meeting
3. Take Notes During Planning Sessions
4. Variety of Non-Confidential Activities

Hold Company-Sponsored Team Building Lunches

Food always has a way of pulling people together! Get your employees out of the office with a barbeque or restaurant outing. If your meal is outside, you can schedule fun games where employees work together. Sports work well for team building.

Sponsor Sporting Event or Team that Employees Can Participate in Together

Create a sporting team for your company to participate in together. This could be a community softball, basketball, or kickball league.

You could also sponsor a sporting event, such as a half-marathon or 5k. Provide your employees with company t-shirts. The t-shirts not only create unity but great advertising!

Encourage Team Members to Volunteer for Charity Together

The camaraderie that people develop when they volunteer together is powerful. Create a volunteer event with a local charity. The event could be picking up trash, building homes for poor families, or cleaning hiking trails. Volunteering together can create positive memories that unite the company.

Host Activities for Employee's Families

Company lunches are great but many employees have families that they would love to involve with events. Hold family-friendly events where employees can develop friendships outside of work. The holidays are a great excuse to hold company parties.

Family-Friendly Events to Host

1. Halloween trick-or-treating at desks in the office and pumpkin carving for the kids.
2. Luncheon the week before Christmas before employees scatter their own ways.
3. Bringing a big screen to the office for family movie night.

Team building exercises can be an investment for your company. When people work well together, they can get more done faster with a positive attitude. It is important to continue team building as your company grows.

Six Buzzwords to Avoid in a CV



When writing your CV, you may get sidetracked by what you think the employer wants to hear. This can lead to buzzwords that weakens your resume rather than

making it stand out – or at least stand out in a good way!

Keep the following buzzwords out of your CV to avoid getting shortlisted by the hiring manager:

Hard Working

Stating that you are hardworking is not enough to prove your work ethic to potential employers. Instead of using the buzzword, mention times when you went the extra mile for your company. This could be an additional project that led to a promotion. Prove that you are a hard worker. Don't just state it.

Creative

Would a creative person list that they are creative or show that they are creative on their resume? Most likely, a creative person would find a unique way to depict their creativity.

Creative Opportunities for Resume

- Color Blocking
- Font Choice (but not too wild or hard to read)
- White Space
- Infographics
- Prioritize Information

Strong Communication Skills

Every employer wants an employee with strong communication skills. However, a more professional method to depicting your strong communication skills is to use well-structured sentences, and perfect spelling and grammar. Also, organize your CV so it is easy to read.

Works Well in a Team

A great team player is important for almost every job position. Demonstrate your

ability to work well on a team with job descriptions. Include your interaction with co-workers and clients.

For example:

- Format information for internal and external communication - memos, emails, presentations, reports
- Be the point of contact between the executives and company employees/clients and manage information flow
- Screen and direct phone calls and distribute correspondence

Results-Driven

Everything is motivated by needing a result. Therefore, even if we only get out of bed during the day, we are all results-driven. Employers do not want to hear that you are results-driven but HOW you are results-driven.

- Did you create a new program at your previous job leading to an increase in efficiency?
- How did you generate revenue?
- Did you streamline a process?
- What projects did you deliver?

Show your employer tangible facts and figures of how you create results. Don't just talk about what you did, talk about what was achieved.

Thought Leader

A thought leader is the informed, go-to expert in their field of expertise. Examples of thought-leaders are Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, and Bill Gates. If you are thought leader than you are probably not writing a resume anymore.

A more modest approach would be to explain your expertise in the field, including awards and achievements or any special recognition from your employer or associations.

A great resume can determine whether you receive an interview. The trick is knowing what to include and exclude. Deterring from these cliché buzzwords can help your chances of standing out and getting the job.

Interview Questions to Avoid Asking Infographic



Some interview questions should be avoided to prevent a lawsuit. Know those questions before you meet your first candidate.

How to Avoid Asking Illegal or Inappropriate Interview Questions

Some interview questions are obviously discriminatory and avoided by all employers. Other questions are more subtle. Learn what questions to recognize and avoid.

This infographic is based on the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) guidelines.

Birthplace, Ethnicity, or Religion



Avoid questions regarding a candidate's birthplace, religious, or ethnicity.

DO ASK:

1. Are you eligible to work in the United States or would you need an employer to sponsor a work visa?
2. What languages are you fluent in?
3. Can you work the days required on the schedule?

DONT ASK:

1. What country are you from? Where were you born?
2. What is your native language?
3. What religion do you practice?

Marital Status, Children, or Sexual Preference



Marital status, children, or sexual preference should not be a concern when hiring.

DO ASK:

1. Are you available to work overtime on occasion?
2. What are your long term career goals?
3. Are any of your references or qualifications under a different name?

DONT ASK:

1. Do you have or plan to have children?
2. Is this your maiden name?
3. If you go on maternity leave, do you plan on returning to work?

Gender or Age



Ask questions regarding whether the candidate can handle the role but avoid gender or age questions.

DO ASK:

1. What can you bring to this role?
2. Are you over the age of 18?
3. Do you have a degree or other qualification related to this role?

DONT ASK:

1. We have always had a man/woman perform this role. Do you think you could do it?
2. How much longer do you plan to work before you retire?
3. When did you graduate?

Location and Lifestyle Choices



What an employee does outside of work should have no bearing on whether they are suitable for the job.

DO ASK:

1. Are you able to be at this job by 9 AM?
2. Are you a member of any professional group that is relevant to this role?
3. Do you have any upcoming commitments that will make you miss work?

DONT ASK:

1. Where do you live?
2. Are you a member of any club or organization?

Simple Stretches You Can Do At Your Desk To Relieve Tension



Sitting at the office for hours can cause extreme stress on your body. You may start to feel pain in your lower back, shoulder, and even your hands. A one hour yoga class can help relieve your body's tension. However, the class cannot repair damage from sitting for eight hours daily.

Fortunately, there are yoga poses that you can do at your desk to prevent chronic strain on your body. Try these poses at work to maintain a healthier and happier body.

Seated Crescent Moon Pose

Do you notice that your left or right shoulder is more sore than the other? Usually the shoulder that is more sore is on the side of your dominant hand. The dominant hand usually maneuvers the mouse and performs more actions on the keyboard.

Due to the overuse, your shoulder is often lifted, leading to stress.

Seated Crescent Moon Pose can help you avoid discomfort that your shoulder experiences. Lift your arms overhead and stretch your fingers wide. Relax your shoulder blades back and down. Lean to the left and take two to three breaths.

Switch sides and repeat.



Wrist and Finger Stretches

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a serious problem for many office workers. The syndrome occurs from typing which leads to pressure in the forearm's median nerve. Hand stretches are important to prevent irritating the median nerve.

Wrist and Finger Stretched releases your fingers, wrists, and forearms. Extend one arm overhead or in front of you. Flex your hands. Clasp the fingertips with your other hand and stretch your palm open. Switch sides
Extend both arms in front of you. Make fists and release. Repeat 5-10 times.



Chair Pigeon Pose

Tight hip flexors can wreak havoc on your body. Walking, sitting on the ground, and bending down can become more difficult. Avoid tight hip flexors with hip openers.

Chair Pigeon Pose is effective for almost every level of flexibility. Sit at your chair with both feet planted on the ground. Cross your right ankle over your left knee to create a 90 degree angle. Keep the foot flexed. Maintain equal weight between your hips. To get a little more stretch you can lean forward in your chair. Switch sides.



Chair Twist

Tight backs lead to a decreased range of motion. A Chair Twist can loosen and realign your back. Your spine can become more mobile to do the things you love outside of the workplace.

Sit at your chair with your feet planted. Turn to your right, using the arm rest or back of the chair to deepen the twist. Hold for three to five breaths. Switch sides.



Ankle Rolls

We often think of the pressure that sitting has on our upper body but our lower

bodies also experience stress. When you sit at a desk, your feet are often remaining in a flexed position for hours.

Many women also wear heels which deepens the damage to the tendons of your feet. If you wear heels to work, switch to flats! Great fashion is not as important as maintaining a healthy body.

Ankle Rolls are a subtle stretch that can be done at your desk. Outstretch your right leg. Point and flex your foot. Roll your ankle in both the flexed and pointed position. Switch legs.



Shoulder Rolls

Sitting at a desk can also cause tension in your neck. A tight neck can create excruciating pain in the upper back. Use shoulder rolls to improve posture and release throat tension.

To perform shoulder rolls, sit on the edge of your chair without your back touching the back rest. Plant your feet hip width apart on the floor. Lift your left shoulder to your ear. Slowly roll your shoulder around and back. Switch sides.



Open Chest Stretch

Opening your chest is not only great for your posture but can also provide you with a burst of energy. The pose opens the chest, decreasing rounded shoulders.

Sit near the edge of your chair and interlace your fingers behind your back. Lean forward slightly, lifting your arms so you feel the stretch in your chest. Hold for 10 to 15 breaths. Release and repeat three to five times.



Set aside a few minutes every two to three hours for yoga poses. Your body will thank you and you can move throughout the day more stress-free!

Four Causes of an Unproductive Workplace



Have you ever heard a business owner say they want to be less productive? I have not! Most business owners want to save time and money.

However, workplace productivity is not always easy. A healthy workflow requires collaboration for the business owner and team to succeed. Learn how to avoid these common workplace problems to prevent tasks from taking hours to complete.

Poor Systems Communication

We create new client file or update important documents almost every day. If your coworkers do not receive the same information then important company procedures could be postponed.

Cloud-based file sharing has become one of the most efficient methods to collaborate information within a company. No longer will you have to email documents within your company. Simply create shared folders that can be accessed by the necessary team members.

There are several file sharing systems that could work for your company.

Dropbox

Dropbox allows you to take your documents, photos, and videos anywhere you go. Place files in your Dropbox and share quickly with a link.

Lastpass

Lastpass allows you to “organize and create strong passwords”. Login to Lastpass, save a password, and share with essential team members. No longer will you have to ask for credit card information or login information every time you need it!

Google Drive

Google Drive provides file sharing and document creation software. More than 120 million users choose to use Google Drive. Users gain free access to 15 gigabytes of shared storage, which includes Gmail. Files can be shared privately with anyone that has a Gmail Account.

Unfortunately, if the user does not have a Gmail account then the file will have to be made public through a shareable link. Many businesses choose not to use

Google Drive since the business owner cannot rely on every team member or client utilizing Gmail.

Pointless Meetings

Have you ever been in a meeting and realized that you really don't need to be there? Most employees have! Verify meetings are operating efficiently to save time, money, and frustration.

Tips to Create an Effective Meeting

- Plan an agenda.
- Make sure you need the meeting.
- Ensure appropriate participation.
- Review work prior to the meeting.

Not Collaborating with Remote Employees

The internet has made hiring remote employees easier and more affordable. Employers also have access to talent from around the world.

A survey completed by The Global Leadership Summit in London found that 34% of business leaders claim that more than half of their workforce will be remote in 2020. The problem is maintaining collaboration with coworkers.

To create a better collaboration process, maintain weekly meetings through a conference call. Also, watch that your team is uploading and maintaining documents through file sharing software.

Unorganized Files

A subscription to Dropbox and Google Drive is not enough to keep your folders organized. Each team member needs to stay aware of folder placement, file name, and more to avoid losing hours of recreating documents. Manage a simple file sharing system to help maintain a productive workflow.

Tips to Organize Your Files

- Collaborate with team to ensure that everyone is using the same file share software.
- Limit folder creation. Think in hierarchies when you create your folders, such as client names or projects.
 - Don't save anything on your desktop.

Developing a healthy workflow will not occur immediately. Consistent organization and collaboration can lead to an increase in workplace productivity.

The Hidden Costs of Low-Ball Offers



Making an offer to a candidate at the lowest end of the range (or below) is just being responsible for your budget, right? At first glance you may think so, but are you really saving money? In my 20+ years of experience in putting candidates and companies together my answer would be a big NO, especially in a market that is very competitive for talent, and the better candidates may have other offers to consider as well.

Some of the companies that are known for making low offers feel they are being shrewd in their negotiations with candidates, and some even justify their low offers by saying they are trying to make sure people are accepting their offers because they really want to join their company and it's not just about the money.

And while that may be true, but the company better have other things going for them (excellent benefits, unique or interesting technology, advancement opportunities, better commute, etc.) to keep those new hires onboard.

In some cases a company is not even aware they are making a low offer, but rely on some salary guide that is out of touch with the realities of the market.

From a candidate's perspective, the salary negotiations and enthusiasm for accepting an offer and joining a company that makes a low offer is drastically different from a company that makes a good (or even just a fair) offer. Candidates that are currently unemployed with no other pending offers may be reluctant to accept a low offer thinking they may miss out on a better offer. Or, they may accept the offer but continue to look for other/better opportunities and leave within a year anyway, leaving the company to go through the recruiting and training process again and incur all of the costs associated with it.

If the candidate receives a low offer from a company they quickly begin to lose the excitement they had when they applied for the position, and begin to wonder if the company will be cheap in other resources and in future raises. And if they have other offers, a low offer can make an offer from a less desirable company look better and increase the likelihood they will take the other offer. In some cases, a delayed counter-offer from their previous employer may also be more tempting if they have accepted a low offer from a new company.

You also need to consider the costs incurred by the position being open longer because you can't get your offers accepted. There are costs associated with someone not being in the role you are trying to fill, and the revenue that would be generated by a good, productive employee being in that role. Insurance companies and the American Management Associate calculate that each employee generates between 5x-10x the salary they are paid in revenue for the company. You can see how quickly the costs for every day the position remains open can accumulate. Not to mention the burnout of the other employees that are picking up the slack.

While salary guides can be useful tools they should not be relied on completely since you also have to take into account what your competition is offering for the same talent. Knowing and exceeding a candidate's salary expectations can pay off big dividends because the candidate is more motivated to show they are worth the

money you are offering, and will work to exceed your expectations as well, which will ultimately save the company money in the long run. Remember, you get what you pay for. A happy and productive employee is a very valuable asset. Let them know you really want them on your team with a good offer and enjoy the additional benefits. It ultimately saves you more money than a low offer and increases your chances of attracting top talent.