SHAW ACADEMY

Lesson 8 Course Notes
Why leaders are
continuously learning.

Diploma in Leadership and Management

SHAW ACADEMY

Why Leaders are Continuously Learning

Introduction

Change demands new skills and competencies. Leaders demonstrate that learning on the job is key to an employee's development. In this final lesson, you will focus on the steps to build a productive learning culture. You will learn why leaders provide the opportunity for others to grow and how the development of a productive learning culture helps to sustain growth in times of change.

Lesson Pillars

Productive Learning Culture
Creating a growth and development mindset
How leaders develop others?
The listening post

Key Readings

The power of believing that you can improve by Carol Dweck
https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve/transcript?language=en

Career development expectations https://www.quadrant1.com/career-development-expectations/

Good leaders never stop learning

http://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/good-leaders-never-stop-learning/

Great leaders are always learning

http://www.thoughtleadersllc.com/2017/02/great-leaders-are-always-learning/

The Best Leaders Are Constant Learners
 https://hbr.org/2015/10/the-best-leaders-are-constant-learners

Lesson Resources: Keep a Learning Log

It is recommended that you keep a learning log. Get a small personal notebook that you can use exclusively for this course. In it, you will record insights, thoughts, reflections on previous leadership and management experiences you may have had. During key learnings in the course you will be prompted to think about a time in your past when you observed, noted or reacted to a situation. The learning log will help to build a picture of your growing self-emergence as a leader and manager.

Build a productive learning culture.

"A man must be big enough to admit his mistakes, smart enough to profit from them, and strong enough to correct them." Quote for John C Maxwell.

How we learn. Failure is the perfect option.

Certain key experiences are crucial in influencing and shifting perspectives. We all go through personal crises that mark and shape us for life. We remember our great teachers.

How many can recall the name of your best teacher?

These formative experiences around upbringing or more recent first-hand experiences like learning from experiencing crises, money troubles, living on the poverty line, it is these personal experiences of challenges that build resilience and learning.

This has profound implications for how organisations think about talent management and leadership development. How can these kinds of experiences be encouraged, more highly valued and sought after in recruitment, personal development and succession planning?

Great leaders coach others in how we deal with mistakes. It's what makes us human. BUT we should learn in a collaborative manner. From the leaders who made the mistake and to whom the mistake was made.

Why is this important? It's down to trust. Leaders take responsibility, they build confidence and trust by being humble, willing to accept failure and learning from it all. Those leaders who can be in control during a crisis make us feel more empowered and focused precisely because they show these leadership traits during a crisis.

When we don't feel in control we get discouraged and in worse situations we feel like victims. Many leaders and managers unfortunately lead with a mindset that failure is not an option.   But here's the truth.

Failure is a perfect option and sometimes it does not require having to say you're sorry. Many today would argue that America is not innovative. Many would argue that organizations are finding ways to make money rather than use money to make things. Mistakes make things. (Edison failed over 1000 times)

When you realize you have power over how you respond, you take away the feeling of victimhood. Mistakes are not about victim hood they are about leading and learning. The more mistakes the more you learn.

Leadership pathways to learn

What have we learnt from the global financial crises?

Good leaders develop through constant learning about their personalities, relationships and careers, not to mention the kind of leader they want to become. they are a product of a never-ending process of skill and character development.

Although there are no silver bullets for becoming a good leader– because everyone takes a custom-made path.

There are some indicators of what can help build the next generation of leaders.

- Performing, or excelling in a role;
- Risking, or taking chances to lead and to learn;
- Stretching, or going beyond one's own personal comfort zone;
- Learning, or taking the time to reflect on past events to discern the lessons they offer;
- Self-awareness, or deliberately seeking to know one's personal strengths and weaknesses;
- Trusting, or relying on one's abilities and those of others to build a reputation for being trustworthy;
- Adapting, or the ability to act appropriately in different situations;
- Mentoring, or learning from other leaders and role models how to develop as a leader;
- Observing, or watching others and oneself to better understand events and situations;
- Integrating, or having the capacity to see and understand the "big picture."

Build a productive learning culture

If you want to build a productive learning culture you need to shift from a culture based on participation in learning activities to a culture based on results from learning activities. To make this shift from a culture of learning participation to a productive learning culture, L&D functions must manage three key components.

1. Executives who set an example for risk-taking and learning from failure.
2. Increase learning participation: Let everyone learn, organise high-quality, curated learning opportunities, and, Build a supportive learning environment.
3. Engagement: Learners now spends 39% of his or her work time learning.
   They waste approximately 11% of their time on unproductive learning.
   Organizations that drive productive learning see a 12% improvement in employee performance

Managers should help employees set learning goals, apply learning, and hold themselves and others accountable for results. Project leaders who use action learning to help their teams learn and improve team performance.

An environment and systems that facilitate sharing information and social learning. This is the kind of culture in which employees will be constantly learning, continuously improving performance, and consistently achieving positive outcomes for the business. Organizations that drive productive learning reduce wasted learning, while also driving a 12% improvement in employee performance.

Creating a high impact learning organization (HILO)

Learn to learn

To effectively improve capabilities within that population, L&D must focus on teaching employees how to learn. Rather than simply creating and delivering learning content, the best organizations advance the organization's learning capability. Designing learning programs that increase employee awareness of how to learn, not just what to learn.

A learning culture is a set of organizational values, conventions, processes, and practices that encourage individuals—and the organization as a whole—to increase knowledge, competence, and performance.

So why should we build HILO?

According to a study by Bersin & Associates, titled "High-Impact Learning Culture: The Best 40 Best Practices for Creating an Empowered Enterprise" (June 10, 2010), HILOs that have a strong learning foundation in place tend to significantly outperform their peers in several areas:

- They are 32 percent more likely to be first to market.
- They have 37 percent greater employee productivity.
- They have a 34 percent better response to customer needs.
- They have a 26 percent greater ability to deliver quality products.

What do you think?

Creating a growth and development mindset

"The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership."

Harvey Firestone

Grow happy and motivated employees

Conceptualized by Stanford University's Professor of Psychology, Carol Dweck's growth mindset is seen as a means of changing the educational process in today's schools, the growth mindset is a concept designed to change how children and teachers approach learning and development.

Although it was developed decades ago, it has continued to be considered a way of looking at intelligence and figuring out how to help learners expand their capacity beyond the framework of a fixed mindset, So can we apply in to business? I believe we can.

A growth mindset involves the belief that intelligence and abilities can be developed over time with the right environment and encouragement rather than if a person's skills and abilities are fixed.
Rather than praising someone for being smart, the idea here is to emphasize the challenging work they have accomplished.

By doing so, researchers found that those being praised for challenging work, will continue to work harder. While those who were merely told, they were smart tended not to make much further effort.

Place high value on learning, are open to feedback and are confident in their ability to cultivate their own and others' abilities."

The growth mindset could be applied to the mindset of a leader, which is critical to team development, staff motivation, and the achievement of strategic objectives.

Stop spending too much time in rank-and-yank mode, grading and evaluating people instead of developing their skills."

In January 2016, researchers at Stanford University confirmed they would be partnering with ClassDojo, an education start-up from San Francisco, to teach young people about the growth mindset.

Apply the 70, 20, 10 Model (Center for Creative Leadership)

Benefits of a multi-generational workforce

Leadership determines a team's level of effectiveness.
The more you seek to achieve the greater the leadership required.
This is the reason for the huge demand for leaders during times of rapid change.
However, a lack of leadership limits success more than any other resource.

Here is a model the 70,20, 10 model to guide the development of leaders in your company.

It's based on research by various researchers at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). This model suggests that a single focus on formal training is insufficient for the development of leadership ability.

Formal training represents only a small fraction of how people learn and develop. The framework suggests that effective leadership development programs are structured as follows:

70% from challenging assignments – real life and on-the-job experiences, tasks and problem solving.

20% from developmental relationships – feedback and working with and observing role models.

10% from courses and training – formal development and reading.

It turns out that leadership development is largely an experiential process. The leadership skills we develop are primarily learnt through experience, not formal classroom training. This is supported by how many of the world's greatest leaders have developed – from Martin Luther King, Jr. through to Nelson Mandela. Many of these leaders were formed, shaped and recognised during times of crisis or adversity. In business – as in life – we learn most by doing.

It's important to recognise that this is a reference model and not a formula or recipe. The numbers are not a ridged formula. The insight here is not in the absolute percentages, but rather the emphasis placed on feedback, mentoring, social and experiential learning as part of developing leadership.

What challenges arise?   We need to create challenging development opportunities.

1. The expansion of roles and responsibilities
2. An increase in decision making authority
3. Dealing with change and diversity
4. Working on new and innovative projects and initiatives
5. Building new teams and capabilities
6. Turning around a troubled project or business unit
7. Leading cross-functional teams
8. Working in a different industry or country

All the above assignments challenge and stretch us, they challenge our thinking and demand that we develop new skills and behaviours for success.

Pushing too far the talented mindset

Enron Corporation was an American energy, commodities, and services company based in Houston, Texas. Founded in 1985. 20,000 staff with revenue of $101 billion during 2000. Fortune named Enron "America's Most Innovative Company" **for six consecutive years**. At the end of 2001, it was revealed that its reported financial condition was sustained by *institutionalized, systematic, and creatively planned accounting fraud*, known since as the Enron scandal. Enron has since become a well-known example of wilful corporate fraud and corruption.

The scandal also brought into question the accounting practices and activities of many corporations in the United States and was a factor in the enactment of the Sarbanes–Oxley Act of 2002. The scandal also affected the greater business world by causing the dissolution of the Arthur Andersen accounting firm. There was a conflict of interest as their auditors as well as being consultants to Enron.

How did such spectacular promise turn into such a spectacular disaster? Was it incompetence? Was it corruption?

It was mindset. According to Malcolm Gladwell, writing in the New Yorker, American corporations had become obsessed with talent. Indeed, the gurus at McKinsey & Company, the premier management consulting firm in the country, were insisting that corporate success today requires the "talent mind-set."

The example of Enron's collapse is cited and explained through its talent-obsessed culture where praise for talent and intelligence led those working for the company to **lie** about any problems rather than admit to the mistakes and problems so that the company could attack, strategize and create a solution.

But by putting their complete faith in talent, Enron did a fatal thing. By creating a culture that worshipped talent, they forced their employees to look and act extraordinarily talented. Basically, it forced them into the ***fixed mindset***. And we know a lot about that. We know from our studies that people with the fixed mindset do not admit and correct their deficiencies. And a company that cannot self-correct cannot survive.

When bosses become controlling and abusive, they put everyone into a fixed mindset. This means that instead of learning, growing, and moving the company forward, everyone starts worrying about being judged. It starts with the bosses' worry about being judged, but it winds up being everybody's fear about being judged. It's hard for courage and innovation to survive a company-wide fixed mindset.

How leaders develop others

"A hundred years from now all that will matter is the people that you connected with in such a way that you added value and meaning to their lives."

John C Maxwell

So, we've covered why leaders grow and develop a mindset around learning, now we look at how leaders develop others. Because attraction and retention are such huge issues in talent management right now (and always), employers would be wise to start investing more resources into their employee training and development, and here's why:

As one of the top three non-financial motivators, 76% of employees want opportunities for career growth. In 2016: 87% of millennials say professional development or career growth opportunities are very important.

Have you identified your successor?

The best leaders realize it is critical to leave a stronger set of people in their wake. According to Maxwell, when all is said and done, your ability as a leader will not be judged by what you have achieved personally or even by what your team accomplished during your tenure. You will be judged by how well your people and your organization did after you were gone.

So where is our future stream of leaders going to come from? It's one thing hiring a top-level graduate - the real skill is to spot the young engineer or HR Generalist who has talents unbeknown to even herself and develop that person to become a stellar leader. Maxwell suggests:

Look to develop everyone. 30% of a leader's time should be devoted to development. Have a visible strategy for development that people participate in every day. Spend more time in the classroom teaching leaders than in the boardroom.

Succession planning

It's important for leaders to take an active role in their own succession planning. Succession is often an afterthought to their myriad of job demands. But what most leaders miss is that a proactive effort to plan for and develop a successor can accelerate career progression and stop them from remaining in a role too long. If leaders cannot identify anyone who appears ready to advance to their role within a two-to-three-year period, take that as a sign that they haven't invested enough time and resources in active talent management.

First, look close to home for a potential successor. Who on the immediate staff has the potential to grow? Look for peers who might be ready for a horizontal move. Direct reports of peers who are viewed as high potential.

Think outside the box – you're not looking for a carbon copy of yourself. You're looking for alignment on the vision, values and purpose. Also speak to HR they have their own pipeline that you can approach.

Development Plans

Identification is the easy part. Now, the real work is in developing those successors. Each successor should have a clear and concrete development plan that aggressively targets the specific skills, expertise and relationships necessary to successfully perform the role. Work with them to create a robust plan that is implemented in full, with ongoing guidance and active involvement.

Tell what Jack Welch did at GE's University at Croton was an excellent example of this. He used to relish the times he could escape to Croton to interface with and personally influence the future groups of leaders for GE. This constant focus on development is what created the incredible run he had in GE, and the lasting string of leaders after he departed. Jack modelled most of the items in the trust model very well, but he struggled with reinforcing candour and coaching people in private, which shows that even the best leaders have room to grow. As Jim O'Toole relates, "One former GE executive who had been dressed down by Welch for daring to question his boss, admitted to the moderator of an Aspen Institute Seminar that Welch's furious tirade 'caused me to soil my pants.'"

Developing full potential – too often we fail

Failure at the management level is at epidemic proportions, according to a 2014 Gallup poll. As the study explains, companies make the wrong choice in selecting managers 82 percent of the time. The study also found that managers account for 70 percent of employees' issues with engagement. Low employee engagement leads to low productivity, which is bad news for the bottom line. Here are four common missteps that explain why managers fail.

Managers believe that establishing an open door policy with employees will suffice. They expect employees to come to them when problems arise, but that typically isn't the case. Approaching a manager can be a daunting task. Employees aren't always inclined to waltz into a superior's office, interrupt her work, and vent about something negative. To stay apprised of what's going on, you need to reach out and search for issues, since it's unlikely they'll come to you. Walk through your open door and engage with your employees to find and solve problems.

One of the first things you learn as a manager is that your own performance doesn't really matter anymore but once you are in a position of responsibility you have to get others to perform in order to succeed. That's an uncomfortable position to be put in and for most managers they rarely are taught or encouraged to develop potential. Here are the five most common things to look out for in a manager who can't seem to take the first step to develop and grow potential.

The Open Door

In Creativity Inc., Pixar's President Ed Catmull describes how, while still basking in the afterglow glow of Toy Story—the studio's enormously successful first film—he found out that all of his producers wanted to leave. They felt that they'd been marginalized and disrespected throughout the entire production process. Catmull was floored. He'd always prided himself on being an "open door" manager, ready and willing to hear out employees' complaints and take action to rectify whatever situation came up. He realized then that having an open door isn't enough, you actually have to walk through it and talk to people. Going into a manager's office is a tough thing to do. You have to cross through the invisible barrier—not to mention an assistant or two—that separates him or her from the outside world, interrupt whatever they're doing and then tell them something unpleasant. That's tough but simply saying, "I have an open door, come to me with any problems" is not going to work. If you want to know what's going on in your organization you have to go out and actively look for problems, not just wait for them to come to you.

Accountability

Many managers are fond of telling their employees that "I expect you to be accountable." It seems reasonable. After all, you hire employees to be responsible, not just to perform certain tasks. Yet accountability is a funny thing. When demanded, its purpose it to absolve the person demanding it. It's like saying that, "your problems are yours alone, don't bother me with them." Employees are generally more than aware that they are accountable. After all, people get fired all the time.

When employees are unwilling to take responsibility, the problem is rarely that they do not understand the concept of accountability, but that they don't feel empowered to get things done and expect to blame when something goes wrong. In other words, they are being very poorly managed. So, if you find yourself feeling the need to preach about accountability, you might want to try taking some yourself. It's probably your fault.

Reorganization

Whenever a business gets in trouble, the first thing managers want to do is reorganize. If the enterprise is structured around customers, they think that more emphasis on products will make them more efficient. If the structure is focused on products, then it seems that a more customer centric organization will improve service. The truth is that reorganizations usually do more harm than good. They rarely solve the problems they are intended to and cause such havoc that it often takes a business years to recover.

Busyness

Many people like to talk about how busy they are. That's a problem. Mostly, it is an effort to signal importance. If you constantly feel the need to show that you have a million better things to be paying attention to than what's going on in front of you, then at the very least you are seriously confused about your priorities. The truth is that there's nothing worse than a manager that is constantly busy. First, it tells people around you that they are not important. Second, it limits your visibility and awareness. If you're busy all the time, how can you know what's going on.

The Search for the "Right" People

Every week the top executives at their management board meetings and complain about the staff.

How important it was to get the "right" people on board. The problem, everybody seemed to agree, was that we had the "wrong" people. Of course, those "wrong" people were hired, trained and managed by the executives in that very room

What made the search for the "right" people even more frustrating is that many, if not most, of the people we hired were successful before they came to us and then did well again after they left us. It was only in our company that they failed (and, of course, our executive team often complained about our employee's lack of accountability).

The truth is that most people want to do a good job and are capable of good performance. It's a manager's job to train, empower and motivate them. If you can't find the right people, then you're the wrong manager.

How leaders develop talent

Leaders need to develop the capabilities of employees, nurture their careers, and manage the performance of individuals and teams. Simply put, leaders are responsible for developing the talent in their organizations. Yet, while many acknowledge its importance, few deliver the coaching and training at scale to develop their people.

PDI Ninth House published its research on the ability of senior-level leaders to develop their employees. The study found that as leaders move up the organization, their ability to develop others decreased -- even though they readily recognize its necessity at every level. The research sheds light on a glaring gap in what everyone agrees is one of the most important competencies of leaders: their ability to build talent.

Time. It's scarce, and urgent tasks have a tendency to consume it. Leaders who aren't disciplined in their priorities will be subject to daily crises that interfere with activities that are part of a long-term investment in people.

Focus on visible skills. As leaders rise to more senior positions, it's natural to feel like they need to demonstrate strategic thinking, strong business acumen, and effective P&L management -- noticeable skills that catch people's attention. Building talent, on the other hand, is less obvious and has a long-term payoff.

Lack of development culture. One of the most interesting findings in the research is that even lower-level leaders who made talent development a priority start to slip when they enter the senior ranks. One-on-one coaching can be intrinsically fulfilling and, for that reason alone, leaders are more likely to set aside time for it. But senior executives make the biggest impact when they distinguish between individual coaching and organizational coaching. It's the latter that lacks most. Call it the culture, or environment, of development that's missing.

Diligent leaders can avoid these traps. Brian Kibby, the President of McGraw-Hill Higher Education, wakes up early to complete his personal tasks before dedicating the work day to focusing on his people, even scheduling 15 minute blocks to have conversations with everyone in his organization. Nevertheless, it's very difficult for senior executives to spend personal time with every single employee and provide the hands-on coaching and training that is the hallmark of a great leader.

1. Act as a role model. Be transparent about your own need to learn and develop and share how you're able to do it. Embrace vulnerability: leaders are never more powerful than when they are shown to be learning.

2. Reinforce the value of learning. Go beyond the baseline conversation about goals. Ask about what they want to accomplish and what they feel their gaps are. When someone completes an assignment, celebrate both the outcome and the learning, especially if the assignment wasn't completed as smoothly as everyone would've liked.

3. Build sustainable processes to support development. Managers should be expected to coach and develop their people. At a minimum, everyone knows what areas they need to improve, and for those with particularly high potential, career tracks are developed that give them a sense of where they can go inside the organization.

4. Reinforce shared values. Employees should be able to link their everyday tasks and responsibilities to the values in the organization. People need to understand why what they do is important.

5. Leverage problems as opportunities for real world learning and development. What's an acceptable failure needs to be clarified and that way, by incorporating stretch assignments, employees can seek out challenges where they can develop without feeling like mistakes will set them back in their career or jeopardize their job. Learning organizations see problems as opportunities.

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Steps to assist in developing others

Maximize the performance of all. As a leader, you get things done through others. A big part of your job is to maximize the performance of every person in your group; that means understanding their current strengths, uncovering hidden talents, and matching strengths and talents to the work at hand. A development conversation allows you to look for ways to improve performance from the point of view of the employer and the employee. The right questions can surface opportunities and obstacles to each person's contribution and professional development. Inviting an employee into a development conversation demonstrates your commitment to the development of your staff and the sustainable success of the enterprise.

Strengths and opportunities

It is important to begin with descriptive, feedback from the employee's manager, and feedback from others (e.g. peers, direct reports, customers, and/or suppliers.) You can sponsor a formal 360-feedback process conducted by a third party or you can gather the information yourself. In either case, the purpose of gathering data is to acknowledge strengths and discover developmental opportunities.

Here are some sample self-assessment questions for the employee to consider prior to the development meeting:

- What is most satisfying, meaningful or compelling about the current work you do?
- What are your strengths? In what areas are you performing at the top of your game?
- What skills do you have that you are not currently using?
- What is most challenging? What nags at you or keeps you up at night?
- How do you think others perceive you?
- What are areas to improve to move you to the top of your game?
  --What are the skills you want to develop?
  --What knowledge would you like to acquire?
  --What opportunities would challenge you?

Host the development conversation

A successful development conversation is collaborative. Before the meeting, you will have reviewed the employee's self-assessment and other data you have gathered. You will have organized your own thinking in preparation for this important conversation. At the start of the discussion, set the tone (hospitable, constructive) and provide an overview. At the wrap up, express your appreciation, confirm next steps, and schedule a follow-up meeting.

Here are some sample questions to discuss during this meeting:

- Given your self-assessment, what goals will you set for yourself?
- What resources will you need to accomplish these goals?
- How and when will we jointly assess progress?
- What do you need from me to be successful in accomplishing these goals?
- What will you do to develop members of your team?
- How do you prefer to be recognized or acknowledged for the work you do?
- What role or position would you like to have three years from now?

Document the plan

Ask the employee to create a document including the goals, actions, and evidence of success. A sample format for a development plan is provided at the end of this guide. Here are some guidelines for creating the plan:

- Commit to a vital few goals (no more than 3 areas for improvement.) You, the team, the organization.
- Select specific strategies to accomplish each goal. Create this list by gathering tips, remedies, and solutions from trusted advisors, coaches, bosses, peers, mentors, readings, and research.

Monitor progress and provide feedback

A good plan sets the destination and the route. Progress requires a continuous cycle of acting, reflecting and adjusting one's efforts based on feedback and insight.
Positive reinforcement is a powerful lever for change. Let the employee know when you observe the behaviours you have agreed are valued. Reinforce desired behaviours. Be on the lookout for projects, assignments, learning opportunities and resources that might benefit the employee. Be resourceful.

What leaders leave behind – a development legacy

1. Invest in people. Prioritize people over results

Three years from now, your team won't remember whether you hit all of your goals. They'll remember how you made them feel on the way there.

Don't always start with the focus on the scorecard, the result? Start with a "How are you doing?" instead. The results will speak for themselves. If you provide the conditions to flourish people will.

2. Invest your time and resources

When you invest in your team's professional growth, your team will be able to have more success and make an even bigger impact in the future. It will carry your legacy even further.

Ask your team to propose areas they would like to develop and then invest resource to get the job done. See where that can become a win-win-win for them, you, and the company. Example: At Dell I enabled each trainer to design their own training rooms. What did they need to feel professional?

3. Connect in person

In a high-paced, virtual world, it's easy to slip into leadership by email. Sometimes, this is a necessity--but your legacy won't be sustained by a barrage of emails.

Make the effort to connect over the phone as well as in person. Bring to bear the full force of your personality

4. Control less; empower more

This may scare you. What if you empower your team to take the initiative and make decisions, and they end up breaking everything you've built?

Teach your team to make intelligent risks and improvise along the way. Work becomes more enjoyable, and they'll become more experienced in independent work--which they may need when you're gone and they have a new leader.

"The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind in others the conviction and will to carry on." Walt Lippmann

The Listening Post

"When I'm speaking, I'm not learning"
                                        Billy Caspar

Why are people striving to improve their listening skills? Because the quality of our listening determines the quality of our influence, and that brings huge benefits to our business.

Consider the statistic that some 40 percent of people in the workforce today do not feel appreciated and valued, and 70 percent are either actively looking for a new job or would very likely accept an offer if it came their way. Clearly, now is the time to reach out to our people in meaningful ways.

Want to become a better leader? Stop talking and start listening. Being a leader should not be viewed as a license to increase the volume of rhetoric.

Knowledge and wisdom won't be gained by talking.

Surrender the floor: Rather astute leaders know there is far more to be gained by surrendering the floor than by dominating it. In this age of instant communication everyone seems to be in such a rush to communicate what's on their mind, they fail to realize the value of everything that can be gleaned from the minds of others.

It is simply not possible to be a great leader without being a great communicator. This partially accounts for why we don't encounter great leadership more often. The big miss for most leaders is that they fail to understand that the purpose of communication is not to message, but to engage – THIS REQUIRES LISTENING. Don't be fooled into thinking that being heard is more important than hearing. The first rule in communication is to seek understanding before seeking to be understood. They aggressively seek out new and better ways to listen.

Communication is not a one-way street. It's a conversation. Simply broadcasting your message ad nauseum will not have the same result as engaging in meaningful conversation. not a lecture or a monologue. A key point for all leaders to consider is the immense value contained in the old saying, "it's impossible to stick your foot in your mouth when it's closed." Think about it - when was the last time you viewed a negative soundbite of a CEO who was engaged in active listening?

How to engage in the act of listening

Create the opportunity for conversation by building communities for listening. Try bringing a broader group together to uncover more diverse ideas and perspectives. Ask the group "what does success look like?" or "how can we achieve better?" Let individuals write their answers down before engaging in a group dialog. This gives everyone the chance to gather their own individual thoughts before being influenced or shut down by stronger voices in the group.

Show up with an open stance and demonstrate that you are present and paying attention. Try actively listening and acknowledging people for their contributions with a genuine "thank you" or "I hear you". Make sure you avoid becoming defensive or avoidant when difficult topics arise.

Co-create: Risk going against the status quo belief that leaders always have to provide the answer. Try rolling up your sleeves and taking part in a problem solving or idea creation activity as a team member rather than a leader. Let someone else lead the activity.

Ask questions that allow the space for something new to emerge. Try asking open ended questions like "how might we…?" that inspire further conversation and engagement from the group.

How leaders improve their listening skills

Going back to Simon Sinek, he points out that great leaders create an environment that feels safe and secure.

With listening put the person at ease, come from behind your desk and have two chair there for sitting side by side.   You are she conveying that you genuinely care about the person, and you are listening intently to what the person has to say. It's not about you

Tune in. Never be too busy to listen. Tune in to the person speaking with an open mind—without problem solving or seeking conclusions—while that person is speaking. Over time you and admired numerous times, not only by his immediate team members, but also by his senior executive colleagues. Most people when given the chance to talk, benefit, by teasing out the solution themselves. They just need a listening ear.

Listen attentively, with a quiet mind and a full focus, not thinking what we'll say, not problem solving in our minds, or even partially thinking of our own to-do list. On average, we retain just 25 percent of what we hear, which is because of our busyness and lack of listening skills. The good news is that we can learn to be a better listener and significantly increase our retention.
Be empathetic. Intuitive listeners are looking for the story behind the message, and the opportunity beyond the issue. Listening is about discovery, and discovery doesn't only impact the present, but it can also influence the future.

Be a conscious listener: which is listening to understand and learn, is our gift to others. Let listening be your calling card.

Moving into or maximizing your ability to take an active listening stance as a leader takes commitment and practice. Even if your first forays into this new approach feel forced or uncomfortable, the more you do it the more natural it will feel. What is more, the payoff for sticking with it will be well worth it.

Guys if you follow these simple steps the next time someone comes to you see changes such as improving your ability to quiet your mind, to focus on the other person, and to become a fully present listener. These skills will significantly improve your effectiveness as a leader.

Be agile and adapt

As we have seen throughout this foundation course the basic core competencies of leadership are developing strategy, provide the vision and execute with courage and leadership. Leaders are strong in action displaying good decision-making and mobilizing other with effective communication. This all comes from an ability to be results focused, be willing to take risks and being agile as needs demand.

Adaptive leadership, however, is different because it focuses on leadership as a practice to be used in situations without known solutions. These adaptive leadership skills are what set great leaders apart:

- Need to be emotionally intelligent, build social intelligence: be self-aware, build relationships.
- Be seen to be fair, share information, focus on outcomes.
- Lead with integrity, credibility and value difference
- Always look to develop others and yourself.

If we learn to distinguish leadership from authority then we can begin to reward, and celebrate, and encourage people to practice leadership from wherever they are operating.

Summary

So, to quickly summarise: We've looked at

- Build a productive learning culture
- Create a growth and development mindset
- How leaders develop others
- The listening post

Keep learning

The best leaders are always learning. They read, listen and engage. Read the opinions of others, and discover the ways in which you agree or disagree. Debate topics you've read about with your team; I promise you'll learn from them. Listening to podcasts is another great way to learn. Leaders constantly scan/observe their environment for insight. Ron Heifetz. Adaptive Leadership one of his mantras.

So, the best leaders are always learning – they are strengthening their strengths and shoring up their weaknesses too. Their constant learning focus is perhaps the biggest similarity between successful leaders across any style of leadership.

Thank you

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