

Application Guide

GREAT LEADERS LEAD THEMSELVES WELL, PART 1



BOTTOM LINE:

Leading yourself well is the foundation for leading others with enduring impact.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- I. Leadership is a wonderful, dangerous gift.
 - A. Some people possess a natural leadership gear that causes others to follow them, whether they are worth following or not.
 - B. Giftedness has the potential to take you farther than your character and maturity can sustain you.
- II. Great leadership is defined by what leaders **do**, not just what they think.
 - A. Leadership is behavioral, and doing is what makes the difference.
 - B. At every critical juncture in life, whether it's at home or at work, pause and ask yourself the question, *what would a great leader do?*
- III. The first person every leader must learn to lead is themselves.
 - A. Your greatest challenge confronts you every morning in the mirror. You are, and you always will be, the most difficult person for you to lead.
 - B. Exceptional leadership begins with exceptional self-leadership.
 1. As a leader, you have *influence* over others, but you can only *control* yourself.
 2. Remember: *"My irresponsibility will always become someone else's responsibility."*
 3. In crisis situations, if you can take responsibility for your part first, then the temperature comes down when you communicate with everybody else.
- IV. Leadership failures often happen in the gap between knowing better and doing better.
 - A. The self-deception we face is thinking that because we know better, then that's all we need to know. But if we don't do something with what we know, nothing changes.
 - B. The more responsibility a leader has, the bigger of a deal it becomes.
 1. When a leader has a high level of responsibility, the entire organization can suffer when the leader fails to deal with the gap between knowing and doing.
- V. Exceptional self-leadership is essential to be a leader worth following, but it's not actually essential for organizational success.
 - A. A leader can build a successful organization while personally failing to lead themselves.
 - B. It's tempting to equate poor self-leadership with extraordinary outcomes, but success should never be confused with health.
 - C. Many highly successful leaders eventually lose influence because they neglected their own character.
 - D. Remember, you can be successful in your personal life **and** corporate life. You don't have to trade one for the other.
- VI. Every leader has an internal salesperson capable of convincing them to make poor decisions.
 - A. That salesperson justifies shortcuts, excuses unhealthy behavior, rationalizes compromise, and explains away warning signs.
 - B. Whenever we catch ourselves selling ourselves, we should hit pause because we rarely have to sell ourselves on a good idea.

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VII. Great leaders make a commitment to tell themselves the truth, even if the truth makes them feel bad about themselves.

A. There is something worse than feeling bad about yourself... failing to acknowledge the thing that is actually bad about yourself.

1. If you don't feel bad, you won't change.

2. Pain is a catalyst for meaningful change.

B. Great leaders are willing to hurt their own feelings, because truth that hurts ultimately helps.

C. The best way to activate this commitment is to ask yourself, *Why am I doing this... really?*

1. The “really” exposes motives hidden behind our initial reactions.

2. Once you face the real reason, you will be more inclined to make a better decision.

VIII. Your accomplishments will make your name known, but how you lead yourself will determine what people ultimately associate with your name.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think self-leadership is often overlooked in conversations about leadership?
2. Have you ever worked for someone who was professionally successful but personally unhealthy? What did you learn?
3. What practical habits help close the gap between knowing and doing?
4. What are some common ways leaders “sell themselves” on poor decisions? How have you sold yourself on bad ideas in the past?
5. How would your leadership change if you consistently asked yourself, *What would a great leader do?* before making difficult decisions?

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