

Application Guide

THE EIGHT PARADOXES OF GREAT LEADERSHIP WITH DR. TIM ELMORE, PART 1



BOTTOM LINE:

Leadership is a constantly evolving practice; what worked yesterday might not work tomorrow. In order to be a great leader, one must be willing to step up to the challenge of a “both/and” perspective, rather than stepping back into the stifling familiarity of “either/or” practices.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- I. A paradox is two seemingly contradictory realities coexisting when it seems like they should be an either/or situation.
- II. The world has gone from complicated to complex. Leadership is no longer just a hard problem, it's an evolving problem; what used to work really well is no longer effective.
 - A. Why: Employees are highly skilled and always learning.
 - B. If we are not staying up to speed on how to lead them, opportunities for mental cavities can arise. Similar to a cavity in your tooth, a hole can open up in your thinking. It's your choice to either fill this hole with healthy solutions, or to let the bacteria come in and fill it for you. In the context of leadership, this bacteria comes in the form of internal narratives.
- III. Every leader has a natural response to reach out for their “level of familiarity” during times of distress. But doing this just doesn't work anymore.
- IV. Today's leaders must begin to adopt the “both/and” mindset over the “either/or” mindset.
 - A. As soon as you get into an “either/or” mentality, you will lose; life is almost always a “both/and” scenario.
 - B. If we are unable to practice these “both/and” paradoxes, we risk the potential to lose loyalty and followship from our teams.
 - C. These paradoxes are not on a continuum of “balance.” Rather, the best leaders know when to play each card at each moment—making sure to play from their entire deck.
- V. The first four paradoxes of great leadership by Tim Elmore:
 - A. **Uncommon leaders balance both confidence and humility:**
 1. People need a confident leader, but they still desire humility in order to establish complete trust. Both are key elements to trust.
 2. The American view of leadership used to be about control and power, but now we are moving away from a control economy and into a connection economy. Humility is essential in order to create connection because it opens up space for input from others.
 - B. **Uncommon leaders leverage both their vision and their blind spots:**
 1. You cannot lead without a goal or a target to hit, but at the same time, it is important to be aware of what you don't know.
 2. Great leaders leverage rookie smarts.
 - C. **Uncommon leaders embrace both invisibility and visibility:**
 1. Leaders are active by showing people what to do rather than sitting back and telling them what to do.

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2. Simultaneously, they don't make it about themselves; they make it about the mission and the cause. It is important to know when it's time to be absent and when it's time to be present—both are pivotal to great leadership.

D. **Uncommon leaders are both stubborn and open-minded:**

1. Stick to what you know is your core; it is great to be stubborn around your values and people.
2. Be flexible in everything else.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. How have you seen leadership transform in your lifetime or career?
2. When was the last time you evaluated your leadership practices? How have you personally implemented changes to them over time?
3. Where are you at risk for sliding back into familiarity? How can you set yourself up to challenge these behaviors when the situations arise?
4. Where do you find yourself within each of these four paradoxes... are you living out of the "both/and" or the "either/or" mentality? How so?

RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- [The Eight Paradoxes of Great Leadership](#)
- [Leadership Paradoxes Assessment](#)
- [Habitudes](#)