Application Guide

GREAT LEADERS TRUST THEIR GUT, PART 2



BOTTOM LINE:

Great leaders learn to leverage their intuition by balancing lived experience with information and humility to make better decisions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

I. **Personal intuition:** sudden burst of clarity and confidence that's based on lived experience more than just an opinion.

II. Great leaders tap into intuition that exists in their organization.

- A. Everyone around the table has unique lived experience and therefore has a lane of intuition that is potentially valuable to the organization.
- B. Create a culture where intuition matters and people are not overwhelmingly asked "why" and "how" too much when they express their intuition.

III. **The right people are not always the usual people.**

- A. Over time, leadership teams can become limited by their shared perspectives and experiences.
- B. A great leader leverages the **entire** organization and brings the right people into the room.
  1. Bring people to leadership meetings who have **different lived experiences at different levels and different parts of the organization.**
  2. The nature of the decisions should determine who the decision makers are.
  3. When an executive cannot make it to a meeting, they should send somebody to represent them.

IV. Creating space for intuition and honest reactions is essential.

- A. Because a leader's opinion can easily be mistaken for a decision, those with the most authority should speak last, but also invite others to speak up.
  1. Intentionally turn to other people and ask, "If this was your decision and you had to make it right now, what would you do?"
  2. Fuel their ideas, even if they aren't the best ideas, because a leader's first response sets the tone for everyone else to feel comfortable sharing.
- B. Prep those who don't normally attend leadership meetings ahead of time as to why they are there and that their voice is valuable.
- C. Resist the temptation to demand an explanation for every idea.
- D. Call on the quiet people and let them know you want to hear what they are thinking.

V. **"Wow before how"** meetings can be beneficial for great ideas to emerge.

- A. This means intentionally creating space for ideas that don't have clear plans for executing them to be shared.
- B. Giving those ideas room to develop can unlock possibilities that might otherwise be dismissed.
- C. Sometimes when suggested solutions are not the best solutions, they can still serve as the starting place for finding the actual solutions.

VI. Great leaders learn to distinguish between intuition and selfish ambition.

- A. Intuition and ambition can both produce strong feelings of confidence, but they come from different places.

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1. **Intuition is rooted in lived experience and focused on what's best for the organization.** It often sounds like "I should…"
2. **Ambition is rooted in personal appetite and focused on the leader's personal desire.** It often sounds like "I want…"

B. However, there is a distinction between selfish ambition and ambition for the success of the organization. Ambition for the organization is an appropriate level of ambition for a leader to have.

VII. Trusting your gut sometimes requires making difficult decisions.

A. Intuition doesn't always point toward the easiest or most popular decision. Sometimes it creates a persistent tension that leaders can't ignore.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. Are you more likely to trust someone's intuition because of their position or because of their experience? How might that influence who you invite into decision-making conversations?
2. Is there someone with relevant lived experience who isn't part of the conversation for a decision you're currently facing? What perspective might they bring?
3. Does your team feel comfortable disagreeing with you? What evidence do you have that their honest opinions are welcome? If there is none, what can you do today to start creating space for honest input from others in your meetings?
4. When someone shares an idea you don't immediately agree with, do you tend to explore it or evaluate it? How might your response influence their willingness to contribute in the future?
5. How can you recognize when your personal ambitions are influencing what you believe is best for your organization?

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