

JUST FOLLOW OUR TRACKS

to being a great leader

Leadership Skills 101

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Published by Incedo Group, LLC, Potomac, Maryland

www.incedogroup.com

301.315.2420

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ISBN: 978-1-4951-8541-0

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Who is Incedo?

Master Certified Coach Linda Finkle is the CEO of Incedo Group, a boutique firm that works with businesses to make practical and long lasting changes and solve core business problems. Linda is a catalyst for change, her no-nonsense approach and first-hand experience in running a business is evident in the success of the companies she has helped.

For more than 30 years, Linda has helped many companies in different industries lead changes in employee attitude, communication and company culture. Her advice has prompted even some of the most established executives to re-think their strategies and communicate with their people in more effective ways. Not only has she improved productivity and revenue, she has also enhanced business and staff relationships throughout all levels of an organization. As a result, she has bridged the gap amongst previously incompatible business partners, significantly improved company revenue and employee retention. To say that she can move mountains with her communication and coaching skills is an understatement.

Prior to the success of her coaching company, she built and managed her own executive search firm. Her recruitment agency hired talents for Fortune 500 companies and small to mid-sized business, and was ranked among the top 10 recruiting firms in the country. In spite of her success, she continued to be hands-on with her business, successfully placing candidates that oftentimes lasted well beyond the typical tenure.

Linda is a Master Certified Coach from the International Coach Federation (ICF). She has a degree from the University of Ohio and certification from Coach U. She teaches the University of Miami's esteemed coach training program. Her book, *Finding the Fork in the Road*, hit the bestseller list on Amazon.

Incedo helps you create an environment that keeps your company fresh and on the cutting edge. Whether you are a business owners, a corporate executive or a partner in a business, Incedo helps you identify what holds you back or gets in your way. We find creative solutions to tough problems and support you as you establish strong relationships with colleagues, employees, clients and all other business associations. So whether your challenge is crisis and conflict management, or you feel like you and your organization are running in place, your business is successful but relationships are strained, there is no succession plan, you aren't sure if you have the right (or enough) emerging leaders to take you to the next level...Incedo is here to help.

In short we help you build an environment that fosters innovative thinking, strong communication and trust. Companies use Incedo because we do a great job! We have a strong suite of programs that touch on organizational development, strategic planning, sales and customer service, and leadership development. Our presentations rock, at least that's what attendees tell us. We are not afraid to bring humor into the executive office and workshop room. Is this all talk? Our follow-up studies indicate that people remember what we had to say months later.

Linda Finkle has an easy-going, take-no-prisoners style about her. Her clients know that while they will have fun, they will be doing solid work. You can count on Linda's willingness to cut to the chase and her no nonsense but fun way of being to move you and your company from ordinary to extraordinary. At Incedo we believe coaching is an art form, to be enjoyed and inspire both the client and the coach. We want to work with your company to help achieve your business goals and do it in a way that is effective and edgy.

Located in the Washington, DC area we've done extensive work with clients across North America, and also in Europe and Asia. We invite you to join us, enjoy the journey, and be inspired throughout the process.

acknowledgment

Many thanks go to Stacey Finkle for all her help in preparing this work. This work would not have been possible were it not for her assistance.

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

Leadership isn't a just a title or a place on the organizational chart. Leadership is the ability to motivate a group of people toward a common goal. We at Incedo Group believe so strongly in this topic that we have dedicated an entire ebook— in fact, three ebooks—on this subject.

The articles and top ten lists contained in this ebook address the issue of leadership skills and offer tools and ideas to improve your effectiveness as a leader. Our goal at Incedo is to separate the story from the facts about leadership to end the cycle of constant questioning about what should you do next or what you did incorrectly. We want you to feel confident as a leader so that you can invest your time wisely. The more competent you are at getting people to move toward a common goal, the more time you will have for defining where you want to go and how to get there.

Leaders are born; leaders are made...whichever belief you hold there is always room for improvement in how one functions as a leader. True leaders concentrate on developing themselves and the qualities necessary for success. In the book *The Leadership Challenge* the authors define five qualities that are essential for success: honest, forward-looking, competent, intelligent and inspiring. These terms, like any others we use to describe successful leaders, are ambiguous, as the interpretation is based on individual values and beliefs. There is no 'standard of measurement' for these traits or any others, but clearly we have to have some way to define great leadership. Thus terms like honesty, integrity, communication skills, resiliency, focused, caring and others have become the definition, along with an implied acceptance that these terms have the same meaning for everyone. What's important to understand is that, regardless of the terms we use to define great leaders, these leaders exhibit, model and display these traits. If we describe a successful leader as resilient, it is because they have demonstrated this behavior time and time again. It's not enough to be resilient once, even when faced with the biggest challenge you as a leader may have ever encountered. The trait of resiliency will be applied to you when you consistently and repeatedly display resiliency in a variety of situations. It is what people see you do, and thus it becomes something people identify with you.

Business owners by definition are entrepreneurs, but so are great leaders of companies, whether they own the business or not. Entrepreneurs by nature are risk-takers, believe in possibility, see openings when others only see hurdles, and much, much more. But don't confuse successful leadership with entrepreneurship. While the two can go hand in hand, brilliant entrepreneurs are not always brilliant leaders. Their brilliance comes from their unique gifts, not necessarily their ability to lead. It's worth noting, however, that many of the qualities that make entrepreneurs successful are also in great leaders. And at Incedo we believe that the best companies create a culture where employees act like entrepreneurs, and the organization helps them build those skills.

Contrary to popular belief, one does not become a great leader by being promoted into the role. Rather, managers must invest time to mentor, guide and develop those individuals promoted into leadership roles. The 'hoping it will work out' philosophy has proven not to be successful. Just as it is crucial to invest time in developing the leaders within your company, it is equally important to remove the weak links. No chain can hold with weak links. No business can sustain growth with poor or ineffective leadership. While removing someone from a leadership role is not a task anyone enjoys, accepting poor performance will have rippling negative effects throughout the company.

Great leaders believe that learning is a never-ending pursuit. They read books and articles, attend conferences and are continually looking for what they can learn. Each experience is seen as an opportunity to learn and grow, regardless of the outcome. A "beginner's mind" mentality keeps great leaders open to new ideas, possibilities and opportunities. All this translates to a belief that they do not have to have all the answers and can probably get them from others.

We at Incedo Group firmly believe that all great leaders are like the Pied Piper. People will follow them because they believe in them, trust them, as they have seen the leaders demonstrate the qualities that earn their respect. Sometimes leaders have to push, sometimes they have to pull until others can see their goal and vision and jump on board. These leaders understand intuitively what is needed from them to move the company forward. The pages that follow offer insights, ideas and even some thought-provoking concepts to help you become the great leader you know you can be.

One

Business Leadership Skills: Traits of Successful Leaders

What are the secrets of true leadership? Who is a successful leader? Are you? Each leader wears a variety of hats for the organization, and yet all leaders have qualities that allow them to influence and implement change and success. What are the business leadership skills that make a leader successful? I offer the following suggestions:

1. High standards, strong ethics and integrity
2. Charisma - not necessarily in the flashy or extroverted sense, but an ability to gain the confidence of others and build high trust relationships
3. Willingness to be vulnerable - showing your weaknesses, admitting mistakes, asking for help, seeking others' advice, ideas and support
4. Passion to create something much bigger than yourself
5. Ability to reinvent yourself or your business - able to respond to changes in the business landscape quickly
6. Clarity about yourself - know why you are on this planet and gain strength and insight from this
7. Risk-taker personality
8. Confidence (without cockiness)
9. Success-oriented
10. Free-spirited yet centered
11. Understand the importance of structure in building an organization as well as the importance of flexibility within this structure

While it's a fact of life that the business landscape will continue to change the business leadership skills, those traits of successful leaders will remain constant. The principles are timeless. It's imperative for your success and the growth of your business that you learn to cultivate the business leader within you.

Two

Three Essential Business Leadership Skills

Last month a client asked me what I thought were the three essential business leadership skills. Wow, what a big question, and it stopped me in my tracks for a few minutes. There were so many possibilities and obvious choices that at first I couldn't decide. Upon reflection I decided the following three traits epitomize successful business leadership: communication, authenticity and consistency. I'm sure each of you reading have your own thoughts and I'd love to hear them. Why did I pick these three?

If one is successful in communication, they can be less adept in other areas. Good communication skills will ease a leader through muddy waters, unclear paths, and challenges. What could be more important as a business leadership skill than authenticity? It builds trust, people know what to expect, fear and gossip are minimized...it may be the most essential skill. Consistency shows up in many ways. Consistency is demonstrated in your words versus actions, in how you treat people, in your ethical standards and even in how you 'show up' every day.

These aren't the only leadership skills that are essential, but to me they lead the pack. If communication, consistency and authenticity aren't present in a leader, then other skills don't matter. What do you think?

Three

Leadership in Business: How Do You Stack Up?

What are the secrets of true leadership? There's no doubt that many executives lead companies without success. No one can truly believe that position and title make a successful leader. So what does it take to have true leadership in business, and how do you stack up? True leadership in business begins with the ability to influence, and influence is the first step in implementing change. The ability to influence is paramount to your success as a leader and the success of your organization, as without change the organization stands still and eventually becomes obsolete. The second essential quality is high standards, strong ethics and integrity. Without this quality your decision-making or the way you operate has no consistency. Trust erodes quickly with employees, vendors and clients as they don't know what to expect. Without trust, long-term success is impossible. And the third quality crucial for leadership in business is confidence. Confidence isn't about knowing it all or thinking you do; in fact, it's just the opposite. Confidence is understanding that you will make mistakes, recognizing there are people smarter than you and asking for their help, an attitude of risk-taking, a willingness to be vulnerable and a sense that there is something bigger than just you. When you combine influence, confidence, and high standards, ethics and integrity, you have what it takes. Sure, leaders have other characteristics, but these three are critical for successful leadership in business. How do you stack up?

Four

Eight Subliminal Mistakes Leaders Must Avoid

Some mistakes are obvious: underestimating financial needs; overspending; sacrificing quality for revenue growth... But there are other mistakes – more impactful mistakes – that will subliminally corrupt the very foundation of your business without your even realizing that they’ve occurred.

1. Worrying about making mistakes.

Every leader has made some mistakes along the way, and has recognized them as learning opportunities. Yet often, as leaders grow the exact skill that made it possible to get to where they are today, they worry about taking risks and making mistakes. The consequences seem bigger now. At this point, there are more people around you who will notice. You believe you ‘should be smarter now’. Yet without your taking risks, growth will stagnate, learning will decline and you (along with your organization) will idle. In the law of physics, an object in motion stays in motion, and an object at rest stays at rest. So go make some mistakes. At least you’ll be moving.

2. Not unplugging.

Leaders are known for not unplugging. They take their smartphones and computers on holidays. They call into the office when on vacation. They don’t take enough vacations. They don’t have enough balance in their lives. They end up burned out and don’t even know it, because they don’t unplug from the office – in both the true physical sense (no phones, emails, etc.) and the mental sense. Ask 100 executives what they do for diversion or leisure, and most won’t be able to tell you. Those who can actually list leisure activities will admit they haven’t done them in a long, long time. (Excepting golf, of course; the corporate sport which can be mixed with work in order to network and secure clients.)

3. Undervaluing the importance of the right team.

What's the single most valuable asset in any business? Why, having the right people, of course. It's next to impossible to find a factor in business today that has more impact on the success of a company than hiring the right people. If you don't have the right people, no amount of revenue can build a successful company. And hiring is just the first step. Undervaluing the team includes spending too little time in developing them, not having the right management team in place (or no management team), ignoring personnel issues that need to be addressed (or delaying so long that they cause other problems), and generally not seeing the organization as a team, or series of teams, rather than a bunch of individual contributors.

4. Failure to develop key leaders.

Leadership is crucial, and developing key leaders provides executives and entrepreneurs with the ability to 'let go' and delegate. One of the most difficult pieces for many leaders is empowering other people, providing them with clear expectations and then letting go. They often believe they can do it better or faster, or simply that it will all fall apart without their doing it personally. Learning to develop leaders is essential. Learning how to empower others is the key to growth.

5. Failing to communicate with important constituencies.

Overlooking or not addressing the evolving needs of your clients or customers, over- promising and under-delivering, not partnering with important vendors, not paying attention to key relationships, not communicating to the rest of the team (or even your partners) are all examples of communication blunders. These blunders aren't deliberate, nor is there malice behind them. The truth is that we become complacent, we get busy, and we focus on other areas and forget the importance of communication. Yet these communication mistakes can be costly in terms of time, resources, relationships and revenues.

6. Not planning, not planning well enough, or not planning for the "what ifs".

Most businesses plan for increased revenues, an increased number of customers and/or additional staffing needs. They recognize when they need to change their technology, or apply technology they haven't used before. What is often missing is a focused plan; a plan with goals and objectives, and steps to achieve them. Include the "what ifs": what if the economy has a downturn; what if I lose my top sales person; what if I get sick and can't work; what if a key contact leaves...? Considering "what ifs" ensures that you can respond to changes rather than simply react to them. The same holds true in relation to planning for growth. One of the biggest business challenges is growing too fast or simply growing steadily but ignoring the need for more and different infrastructure. If you are going to build a one-story house you can go with a different foundation than you'll need for a skyscraper. The same applies to business. The systems, processes, procedures, technology and all related infrastructure needs to be considered, evaluated and modified as a business grows. Unplanned growth brings other problems: customer service, internal staff, delivery...

7. Assuming that what got you here will get you there.

What (and who) can get a business to a certain level may not be (and often isn't) the same as what (and who) can get them to a higher level. To illustrate, consider that an organization may hire people who are perfect for them when the company is producing revenues of \$500K, and yet those same individuals may not be the right people for the organization as they approach \$3M. It's sad to acknowledge this, but true, and business owners and leaders need to be willing to look at their staff regularly to determine if they have the right people to take them forward. Often the factors that moved the company to one level in sales will not be the same factors needed to get to the next level. A company may need to change how they market, whom they market to, who they see as their ideal client, level of service, and a multitude of other considerations. Believing that what got you here will get you there is an assumption with huge, potentially negative consequences.

8. Not seeing everything through the lens of “what can we learn from this”?

One of the keys to long-term success is looking at everything and seeing the lessons we can glean from our experiences. Successes and what might be perceived as failures all have lessons attached if we are willing to look for them. To grow a business, one has to continually have a beginner's mind – always be willing to look for new ways of thinking, find new ways of looking at things, and watch for the learning that will come from each attempt that's been made.

You can break – or make – a business through your mistakes. Entrepreneurs, by their very nature, are risk-takers, so mistakes go with the territory. Winston Churchill said, “All men make mistakes, but only wise men learn from their mistakes.” There's truth in that, and entrepreneurs are certainly no exception to the rule. Yet the key to entrepreneurial success lies in being aware, learning from your mistakes – and putting a plan in place to avoid the ones you can.

Five

Business Leadership Skills As Defined by John Wooden

I'm not a big follower of sports and yet I believe that there is a lot to learn from sports as it applies to business. John Wooden, the legendary basketball coach of UCLA, was a man who not only understood basketball but understood leadership. John Wooden developed the "Pyramid of Success" which defines the business leadership skills he considered essential for success and the 12 lessons in leadership. If you aren't familiar with this, you can find it on his official [website](#). What I love about his definition of business leadership skills is that he focuses on the character of the person, understanding that character is a bigger factor in determining results than ability. His famous quote, "Ability may get you to the top, but it takes character to keep you there," says it all.

Of course results are important. No company can survive without success. Yet I find myself wondering if results have become a more important leadership quality than character. Wooden, in his "Pyramid of Success," uses words like poise, friendship, loyalty and self-control. He recognizes these qualities and the others he defined as critical business leadership skills that will ultimately ensure the results.

Look around at our leaders in companies, government, politics and yes even sports. What do you see as the common characteristics of those you admire? Achievement comes from who we are, at least in my humble opinion.

Six

Leadership In Business Requires Being an Entrepreneur

Does leadership in business mean you have to be an entrepreneur? Well, let's first discuss the word *entrepreneur* and what it means. Entrepreneur—is it a person, a role, or a way of thinking? Does it change how we look at leadership in business if it is a role versus a person versus a way of thinking? I think not!

Being an entrepreneur can indeed be a role or a person, but it doesn't have to be. To me, it's a way of thinking, and whether you own a company or work for someone as an employee, you can be an entrepreneur in the way you think and thus your actions.

Thinking like an entrepreneur means being willing to take risks, thinking big, looking and considering many possibilities, asking tons of questions, not settling for status quo because it's easy, looking for and recognizing patterns that impact the business, etc., etc.

I don't think you have to be in a leadership role to think and act like an entrepreneur. It's a state of mind, a way of seeing the world, and that does not mean you have to hold a specific role in the organization. However, if you want to have a significant impact on your company, you have to think like an entrepreneur, regardless of the role you hold.

Seven

Benefits of Getting Employees to Think Like Entrepreneurs

Why should you as a business leader create an atmosphere of entrepreneurial pride and attitude? Why bother? What's in it for you?

The Benefits:

- 1. Employees focused on accomplishments/results:** How often have you heard “I worked really hard,” or “I called everybody,” or “I put in 50 hours last week,” or...? Employees who focus on results take responsibility for the outcomes they produce, rather than on activities. The outgrowth of this attitude is visible at many levels.
- 2. Communication changes when accountability is focused:** Blaming stops, team dynamics improve, problems get resolved rapidly, and many problems never occur. As each person accepts accountability for themselves (and the results they produce), the communication changes between employees, leaders, customers and vendors. That communication shifts from blame to resolution. Relationships improve at all levels.
- 3. Goes beyond treating the symptom or problem:** When symptoms are treated as the problem, they likely recur. When employees simply do what is asked without questioning why / what else / is there a better way / what is the desired result, resources are often wasted, redos are common and frustration becomes the norm. As employees learn to go beyond what is asked of them, and question if anyone else (customer, another staff member, etc.) may be experiencing this—what results do we want, has this occurred before, how did this occur, is this bigger than what is being communicated, does it need resolution or just someone paying attention—as they think bigger the results will change. Results such as better communication, resource allocation, decreased mistakes, improved efficiency and more.

4. **Being realistic and resilient leads to improved productivity:** Nothing shuts down productivity quicker than unrealistic expectations and rigidity. When emotions and energy are focused on what's not working, who's to blame, the can'ts, won'ts, should haves and must haves, focus is lost, and morale and productivity are negatively impacted. As employees learn to be more realistic about their expectations of others and situations, as the responses shift from can't, impossible, or no to 'let's determine how' or 'of course' or even 'maybe', improved productivity is the eventual outcome. Just think of how many hours your team or organization would gain if time was spent on 'how to make it work' instead of what isn't working, why and who's to blame.

5. **'What's next?' thinking leads to growth at many levels.** As employees begin to think 'what's next?'—whether it's about their own skills and learning, how to grow and develop others, how to go beyond the status quo—growth is the clear by-product. Employees become leaders, both in the real sense of promotability but also in how they think, act, and behave. Intelligent risk-taking opens up avenues previously unexplored, with the potential for increased revenues and/or decreased costs. When ideas are communicated, questions are asked, and people are thinking beyond their current role or sphere of influence, then creativity explodes, and motivation and morale improve, which translates to revenue and profit growth.

Eight

Top Four Ways to Help Employees Think Like Entrepreneurs

- 1. Describe the organization:** What are the organization's values, missions and goals? Where does the employee's role fit in and how can they make a difference? Explain how you make money. Don't assume they understand the ins and outs of revenues and profitability. Do you have plans you can share with them...marketing, operational or strategic plans that help them understand where the company is going and what they can do to help you achieve these goals?
- 2. Use real scenarios to demonstrate your thinking:** We are busy people and we rarely take the time to use the situations that occur as a lesson to demonstrate how we want employees to think, behave and act. Keep examples (and have your managers do the same) of situations that occurred, what happened and the result (positive or otherwise). Use these as teaching opportunities for employees. Help them understand what happened, what worked, what didn't, what result you wanted. Get them thinking. Ask them how they would have handled the situation, and guide them to your way of thinking if they are off.
- 3. Help them understand the competition:** This could be anything from competitive intelligence and sharing this information with employees, to asking customers to assess how your organization stands up to the competition. Do you subscribe to industry publications that are made available to your employees? Are they encouraged to read these publications, take industry-related courses, or join professional associations? Sales and marketing people aren't the only ones who need to understand the competition. Every interaction with your organization by a prospective or current customer counts. Make sure every person in your company knows and understands this and how their role can contribute to the company's competitive advantage.

- 4. Inspire intelligent risk-taking and innovative thinking:** How can you create a culture of encouraging risk-taking without damaging relationships, creating problems or impacting revenues? First, you have to allow employees to make decisions that involve risk. Next, use these situations as teachable moments. Help them understand the difference between calculated risk and taking foolish chances. If something didn't work, don't chastise and punish; work with them to understand why, and what to do differently in the future. Remind them that the path is rarely without bumps and hurdles. Have them share with others their success stories, and the ones that didn't work so well and why. Promote innovative thinking. Support ideas by implementing some of them. Regularly emphasize the advantages of innovative thinking, and the disadvantages of doing things the same old way. Help employees learn to brainstorm, suspend judgment about what won't work and open themselves up to possibilities. As a final note, let them know that every idea is worthwhile, but the timing, cost, ROI, etc., may make it difficult to implement. You want them to understand that not implementing their idea is not a reflection on its value, or meant to discourage them, but to teach them that many factors go into making business decisions.

Nine

Developing Good Business Leadership Skills

Is it true that one can develop good business leadership skills, or is it what we want you to believe? By we I mean people like me—coaches, consultants, authors, trainers—all those people who want to sell you products or services. Well, the honest truth is that it depends. Whether you can build good business leadership skills depends on a couple of factors. One of those is how you are defining good business leadership skills. Does this mean leadership skills as in managing, developing others, team building, hiring successfully, etc.? Or does it mean skills for building a business, such as planning, business development, marketing, strategic thinking, etc.? The definition matters, as some skills can be developed, while others can't, in my opinion.

The second factor is motivation. Everyone given the chance to develop business leadership skills and be successful would, if it were easy. The question is how much motivation, desire and impetus do you have to make it happen? Skill-building isn't easy. It takes practice, patience, trial and error, analysis and a desire to change. Many have the desire. Some have the ability to analyze what's working and what's not and make the shifts. Fewer have the tolerance for trial and error or the patience to keep practicing when results aren't instantly forthcoming.

Next time you think about building your business leadership skills, ask yourself what that means to you. And then ask yourself if you are really, really committed to do what it takes to build those skills. There's no shame in acknowledging inertia and saying no. In fact, you'll save yourself time, money and frustration. On the other hand, if you can honestly answer yes, then you'll see results in ways you expected, and in ways you never expected.

Ten

Leadership in Business: Managing the Spinning Plates

One of the most difficult tasks for any leader is keeping all the spinning plates going without letting one drop. We teach leaders how to manage multiple priorities and how to keep the plates spinning, but we don't teach them how to deal with their own feelings when things are going out of control. Perhaps the next course I develop on leadership in business will be to address this issue...how do you as a leader handle your feelings when things are out of synch?

Companies expect leaders to simply manage through the chaos and keep their feelings hidden. Managing the chaos and managing one's feelings about the chaos are not the same things. And assuming that if the disorder is handled the feelings associated with it will be alleviated is faulty thinking. For many people, when things (process, people, situations, etc.) are out of control, they believe they are out of control.

Putting order to this will help lighten the feelings but they don't go away. Why not? Because leadership in business means you recognize that the situation you just solved is likely to recur, so there is a constant undercurrent of 'waiting for the other shoe to drop.' Picking up the plates and getting them spinning again might resolve the immediate crisis, but it does not guarantee that the situation will not happen again.

Knowing this means there is a constant state of thinking that things are out of control, or will be in the not-too-distant future. How do you as a leader learn to handle those feelings? And how do you learn to handle them without believing you are weak or incompetent?

First, accept that your feelings exist. Ignoring them or pretending you don't have them won't help. Second, understand the cause. Is it too many spinning plates, not knowing when they will drop, worrying that you have not solved the problem, or something else? You can't resolve what you don't understand. Finally, ask for help. Leadership in business isn't about knowing it all or doing it all. You don't have to go it alone.

Eleven

Six Tips to Becoming an Authentic Leader

There is no more important quality in a leader than authenticity. Without it, you simply cannot build the high trust relationships your company needs to succeed. How does one become an authentic leader?

1. **The voice of a real leader must be expressed authentically.** When you speak from your heart, you create trust, collaboration and connection with everyone around you. Authentic expression goes deeper than the ability to convince key people to attach to your star. It involves telling your people what you're going to do, and then doing it. Do not vacillate or make up excuses why you can't or didn't do what you said you'd do. When you're being authentic, your words come straight from your heart and people will feel your conviction and the fundamental connection between who you are and what you say. They will trust you when they know that you are all about straight talk that creates genuine value.
2. **You must communicate often and openly, and request the same from others.** It's not always easy to communicate authentically. Unfortunately, many leaders lack a tie between who they are and what they do. It's more than just telling the truth. It's often difficult to share unpleasant or unpopular news, so it's tempting to deflect dissent or soft-coat the tough messages. Communication isn't about sharing only the good news. It's about sharing the good, the bad and the indifferent. It's about sharing what's true, not what you 'think' they want to hear.
3. **Set clear expectations and standards for behavior.** It's critical that you communicate to your people the rules, standards and ethics by which they are expected to operate, but even more significantly, it's essential that you follow them yourself. Once you've set a standard, it's imperative that you don't suddenly bend the rule on your own because, in a specific instance, it makes sense to you. If you make a decision to change the rule, across the board, there's nothing wrong with that, but the piece that's imperative to remember is that you must communicate that change to your people and let them know exactly what will be changing and the thought process that led to this decision. You can't expect them to 'figure it out' or understand it intuitively. You must explain your reasoning and thought process to them.

4. **Hold people to the commitments they've made.** When the time comes that one or more of your people don't stand by their commitment (which will happen), it's a mistake to scream at them, tell them how screwed up they are or, worse yet, ignore the situation and say absolutely nothing. It's important that you remind them of their commitment and, in a straightforward and calm manner, let them know how you feel about the commitment's not being kept. And if that means expressing disappointment or frustration, then that's exactly what you express. You're not doing your people, your company or yourself any favors by letting the situation slide.

5. **Value your people.** Authentic leadership is all about caring deeply for your people. You want to understand who they are, what's important to them and to learn as much as possible about what makes them tick. Knowing that you're invested in them as people creates a sense of well-being, trust and commitment within your workforce. Having a highly committed and motivated staff pays off, both in the short and long term. However, by the same token, if you see your people simply as another resource (like a computer) that is disposable, or as a necessary but unimportant aspect of doing business, you can be sure that they will sense that as well, and react accordingly.

Care enough to insist on accountability. Caring may mean that you have to 'kick them in the ass' at times, hold people accountable, share with them where they need improvement, and explain what you expect from them. As Coach K says in his book, *Leading with the Heart*, "It isn't about holding hands and skipping down the path, it's about what the hell are you doing and why aren't you in class?" Caring sometimes means caring enough to invest in people to make them better. It isn't simply about being nice.

Twelve

Good Business Leadership Include Change Management Skills

Here's what I know...change is the nature of business today. And good business leadership requires those in charge to learn how to manage change effectively. Wouldn't it be lovely if any time there was change in your organization it was embraced with enthusiasm and excitement instead of resistance and opposition? Yeah, I know ... you're thinking *Yes, but that will never happen or Dream on, Linda.*

Well, maybe you're correct...at least as of right now. But I'm here to challenge your thinking and perhaps poke at you so you come to believe that change doesn't have to be fraught with disaster. It's how you manage change that's a core skill in good business leadership.

Embracing change doesn't come easily for many, maybe most. But in my experience, resistance is communication-related. You get resistance when you 'sugar-coat' the change, you ignore how people feel about the change, you browbeat them when they resist, you assume once you've told them there's nothing further to discuss or, worse yet, you don't communicate at all.

Brilliant leadership requires developing skills in many areas. However, in my opinion, building skills in the area of change management will be critical to your long-term success as a leader. After all, change happens all the time, whether you plan for it or not.

Thirteen

Business Leadership Skills: Change Management 101

Organizations are often in continual change mode. Let's face it...rapid change is the nature of business today. Managing change is one of the key business leadership skills executives must develop. Change is something not all employees are comfortable with, and because of this fact, it's common practice for organizations to blame employees and middle management when a change fails. The prevailing thinking being that the employees need to 'get with the plan' and change with the company. That's true enough. But what this demand doesn't recognize is the impact the company leaders' behavior can have on how the change is planned, received and implemented by their people.

Developing the business leadership skill of managing change is critical for all executives. The way a leader manages organizational change has a significant impact on whether it's supported or resisted. The focus should be on what the leaders do - and what they fail to do.

Change can be effectively managed with leadership involvement. Take a look at a few tips based on what has worked for us and for our clients:

- **Be up-front.** As soon as you know that change is coming, begin preparing the people. One of the best ways to overcome resistance to change is to inform people about the change effort in advance.
- **Communicate.** Frequent, regular and transparent communication about the change builds trust, gives you the opportunity to explain what you want from your staff, and allows them to openly communicate their concerns, issues, fears or perceived challenges related to the change.
- **Be clear.** When employees show resistance, speak openly and honestly about this. Times of major company transformation call for straight talk rather than "beating around the bush." Communicate that you need everyone to embrace the change, and clearly outline the consequences of not doing so.

- **Force accountability.** It's important that you don't take responsibility if people are not embracing the change. Be clear, care about their feelings and issues, but each person needs to be personally accountable for either stepping up or stepping out.

All executives need to develop the business leadership skill of creating an affirmative change management culture. By following the above tips, an astute leader can build a change management strategy that addresses issues before they become problems. In other words, avoid resistance by building trust first. Leaders can effectively manage change through involvement – it's Change Management 101.

Fourteen

Leadership in the Workplace: Do Women Make Better Bosses than Men?

Did you notice the title? *Leadership in the Workplace: Do Women Make Better Bosses than Men?* We so often hear about women as leaders and the challenges they face. And women leaders are compared to men, but usually the comparison isn't flattering. So today we are standing up for women leaders and asking the question about leadership in the workplace and if women are better bosses than men.

Some time ago [MSN Career Builder](#) featured an article espousing the fact that men are better bosses. The writer's opinion and research notwithstanding, I don't actually think this is an "either-or" kind of question. It's really a question of what qualities make someone a successful boss.

The truth is that there are more men in leadership roles today than there are women. Since we are most familiar with men as leaders, it's easy for us to think that men are better leaders – certainly there are more good male leaders than good female leaders. However, it's equally true that there are more bad male leaders than bad female leaders. The simple fact is that there are simply more male leaders – good and bad. This is not proof that either gender is a better leader.

Whether you are male or female, leadership in the workplace comes with an expectation of *good* leadership. Being a good leader means you set strong values for your business and live by them yourself. It means that you have respect for the people you manage, guide them without micro-managing, build strong relationships, create a team atmosphere, appropriately reward your people for a job done well, and communicate effectively when performance falls below expectations. Many qualities make good leaders, so the question isn't whether one gender is better boss material than the other. Rather the question is: What makes a successful leader?

Fifteen

Executive Career Development Includes Personal Branding

The subject of executive career development is everywhere: what skills leaders need, what companies in today's economy require in their leaders, how we develop leaders, succession planning for leaders, and more. I don't argue that these are important topics. I've written about them myself many times. Yet the one piece I think is missing from these discussions is personal branding for executives.

Branding for you, the executive, is just as important as branding is for a company. We think of branding for authors, consultants, artists and all kinds of other professions but don't recognize that personal branding for the executive is just as important, perhaps more so, than developing any other skills. You might be the Pied Piper of leaders or as brilliant as Jack Welch, but if no one knows about you it ain't all that helpful.

I've known [Vickie Sullivan](#) for years and she is the queen of branding...and not just speakers and authors. Vickie helps executives 'get at the heart of packaging your expertise' so you become visible and well known to those both inside and outside your organization. Vickie and I agree that branding is THE critical component of executive career development. Without it you might as well cross your fingers and toes and hope someone notices you. But with all the competition out there for key positions, why would you want to take the chance? Not a sermon, just my thinking.

Sixteen

How I Learned Good Business Leadership, Lessons from My Dad

Three years ago this month my father passed away. He was a partner in a wholesale paper company till he retired. Then he worked as a consultant in the paper business for many years. Throughout my childhood I remember his talking about what it meant to have good business leadership skills. After he retired from consulting, we would sit for hours and talk business. I learned from him about running a business, being a leader, integrity, ethics, and so much more.

As the anniversary of his death approached, I was thinking about those many conversations we had and what I learned. Good business leadership doesn't just happen. It's a skill you work on daily and develop throughout your career. Who we are as human beings – our values, ethics, morals and beliefs – certainly shapes how we operate in business, but it's not the only factor. I remember my dad's telling me a story of how he handled an angry customer. At the time he was president of the company, and this customer had already spoken to several other people, I suspect without satisfaction. By the time he got to my dad he was hopping mad.

How did Dad handle the customer? First, he said, "Tell me what you want. How I can make this work for you?" and then, "Tell me the problem."

What was the lesson I learned? I learned that making someone repeat their story wasn't helpful. I learned the power of 'taking the wind out of someone's sails' who was looking for a fight. I discovered that people below me may not know what to say or believe that they have the authority to make decisions, so I may need to educate them...and so much more. This is only one of dozens of examples of how I learned good business leadership from my dad. Today I find myself wishing he were here to teach me more.

Conclusion

Thank you for partaking in yet another Incedo Group creation. We hope you enjoyed this learning experience and that you walked away with a glimpse of what it takes to become a great leader.

As the articles and Top 10 lists illustrate, successful leadership demands time and energy. You may be born with leadership skills, but the road to success is littered with people of great talent who either did not apply themselves or assumed their talent was all they needed. By investing time in building your skills as a leader, you reap rewards for yourself and for your company. Likewise, the time investment in training and developing your rising stars, those people you manage in leadership roles, will positively impact productivity, performance, turnover and, ultimately, the growth of the company. Finally, by devoting time to continually assessing the needs of the organization, you will recognize what skills need developing to sustain the growth of the company.

Leadership isn't a title or role you hold. Nor is it a sometimes thing. It requires commitment to yourself, your company and those around you, to continual learning and development of yourself and others. You must model the behavior and actions you want others to adopt. Great leadership isn't a "do as I say" thing; it's a "do as I do" thing.

Whether you are considering taking on a new leadership role, promoting someone into one, or simply wanting to improve your skills, you can benefit from the advice and insights contained on the pages of this ebook.

As a final note: Remember, this is one of three ebooks on leadership. Each one includes different concepts of leadership. There is no overlap, and the books can be read in any order. Thank you for taking the time to read this Incedo Group compilation. Now go spend some time becoming the great leader you are capable of.