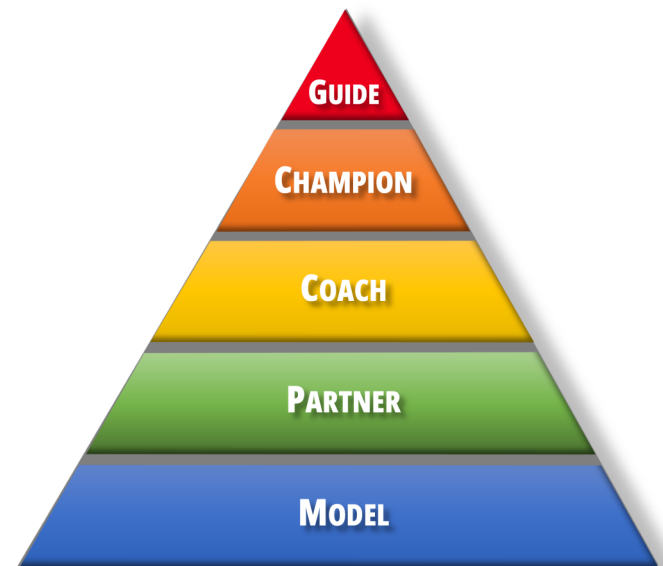




FINDING YOUR WAY AS LEADER

AN INTRODUCTION TO PATHS TO LEADERSHIP



Leadership Matters!



*“You manage things;
you lead people.”*

Rear Admiral
Grace Murray Hopper

*“Leaders must transition from
being responsible for the job, to
being responsible for the people
who are responsible for the job.”*

Simon Sinek

Results matter...

The pressure is on. Work is fast paced and changeable. Execution is essential. Things must get done and timelines are tight, with little tolerance for missed milestones. High performance is expected. To survive and thrive in any business today, you must deliver results reliably.

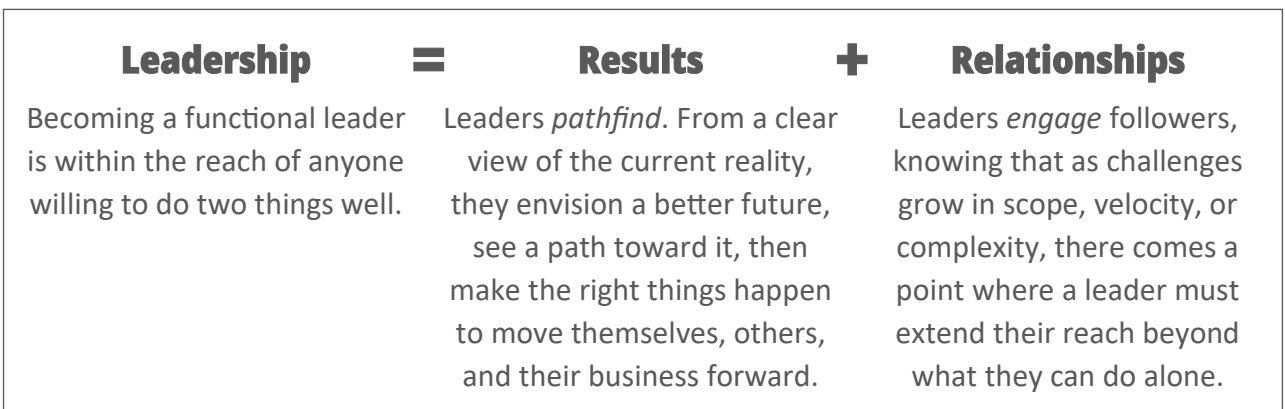
People matter...

Whether private business, public service, or not for profit agency, people deliver the most valuable results generated by an organization. The things of an organization—systems, structures, or strategies—don’t work unless people make them work, and won’t change until people change them. No organization can afford to have performers (those who do the work) fail in response to challenging business realities, working at less than their best, or wasting their efforts on low value activities. Nor can they afford to lose talented people needlessly.

And, people need leadership...

Not all the time. But when people work together on any but the simplest undertakings, there are times when some are not prepared on their own to do what needs doing. They need the guidance of someone who sees what they don’t, points the way, takes the first step, shows them how to do their part, and supports them as they try.

They need someone like you to lead!



Are You a “Leader”?

To seek out leaders, most of us simply look up the organization chart toward those with titles like supervisor, manager, or executive. With these “formal” leader positions comes authority over others, and an expectation they will lead their team toward results. And, when you’re the “boss”, people may do as you ask—deferring to authority is a habit conditioned by our shared history in school, work, even in our families. But, if that’s the only reason others do what you want, you are not leading. You are borrowing power from your position, a coercive short-cut to influence that is short-lived and unreliable.

For 30+ years, we’ve asked workshop participants to look at their leadership role models, their “Best” and “Worst” examples. Many of the leaders identified as “Worst” had a title and authority but led poorly as evidenced by poor results, failed plans, low morale, and high turnover in their teams. Just as important, many of the “Best” leaders identified were not bosses at all, holding no formal title or position, but looked to for leadership because they seemed to know where to go and inspired others to get there with them.

Don’t get us wrong; some of the best leaders we work with are formal leaders at or near the top of their organizations. These leaders distinguish themselves not because of their title or position, but because they have the one thing every “functional” leader must have.

The One Thing

Only one thing makes you a “functional” leader: *followers*. Until others choose to join you on a path to results, you are not leading. Potential leaders reveal themselves by stepping up to challenges, making choices that show others who they are and what they care about. If others like what they see, they make their own choice, to get in step, to be engaged, to be followers open to the leader’s influence. Ultimately, an organization doesn't choose its leaders by promoting them; its people select their leaders by choosing who they will follow.

If you hope to be a true, functioning leader, you need to attract two types of followers...

- **Performers** with the competence and commitment to do the work required; and,
- **Stakeholders** to provide access, resources, or support needed to get that work done.

Using the terms leader and follower here is not meant to elevate or diminish either. Each is essential in pursuit of results, and most of us are leader in one situation, then follower in another. Organizations need both great leadership and great followership.

Anyone Can Lead

An organization’s ability to execute, improve, and adapt is enhanced by functional leadership showing up from the front lines to the boardroom.

Formal Leaders: Executives, managers, and supervisors are given authority to assign, direct, and assess the work of their team, and held accountable for its performance. Their reports though ultimately decide if they are simply the boss, or leaders worthy of being followed. Often overlooked, formal leaders on the front lines may have 80% of the people of an organization reporting to them. They are best positioned to lead those workers, knowing what hinders their best efforts and what’s needed to keep them engaged and productive.

Helpful Advisers: A growing cadre of individual contributors is expected to achieve goals, but without formal authority to require others to help. With projects to complete, policies to administer, or standards to enforce, they earn followers to work with them by pitching in, sharing their expertise, and helping others solve problems that really matter.

Seasoned Performers: When less mature workers don’t know what to think or do, they seek guidance from the conduct and opinions of their more “seasoned” peers. Intended or not, the example set by those who have “been there, done that” is a form of leadership, their words and actions influencing other’s choices, especially when things must change.

Choose to Lead

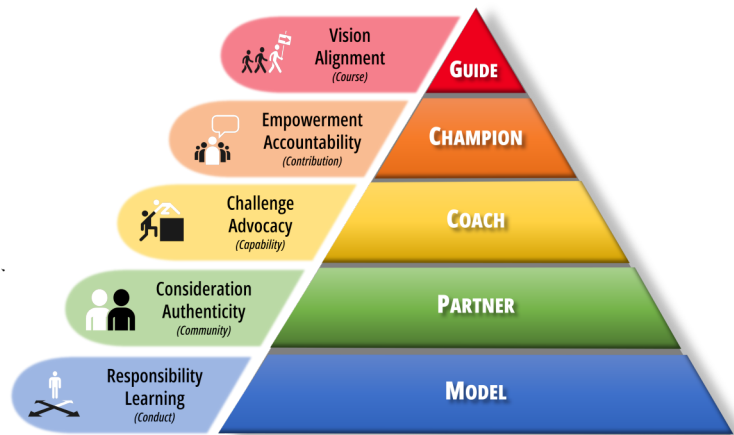
Every day, each of us has opportunities to lead, moments when something that matters is at risk, we see a way forward, but need the cooperation and support of others to make the right things happen.

Some leadership moments are subtle, the choices to be made relatively easy. Many are more challenging, with choices that seem difficult or demanding, and other, easier ways to go. In those more challenging “moments of truth”, while most remain bystanders, leaders step up.

They choose to lead.

There is no one “best” way to lead. Every leader must find your own path to success, adopting habits of thinking and action that suit them, their situation, and the followers they seek. But the defining challenges along the way are predictable, and for each a recommended role and proven strategies others have followed to lead more effectively.

These roles and strategies are outlined on the right, then explored more fully on the pages that follow.



Challenge 1: Conduct—Be a Credible Model

Leaders are upfront, their behaviour visible and influential. If you don’t step up, exhibiting the beliefs and habits essential to success, you can’t expect others to do so. Be an example of the *Responsibility* and *Learning* needed in a demanding, dynamic environment, never allowing weakness, habit, or selfish interests to damage your credibility in the eyes of potential followers.

Challenge 2: Community—Be an Influential Partner

To achieve big results, leaders need to extend their reach, building strong connections with followers who bring talent, energy and other resources to the work at hand. The most reliable source of power in these relationships is influence earned with others over time by demonstrating you can be trusted to be *Considerate* of their interests and *Authentic* in every interaction.

Challenge 3: Capability—Be a Challenging Coach

Leaders today can’t “control” others’ performance in work situations that are dynamic, demanding, and often distant from you. The best you can hope for is “remote control”, performers able and willing to do their best work because you *Challenge* them to stretch to their full potential, and gain their confidence you are *Advocating* for their interests, ideas, and ambitions.

Challenge 4: Contribution—Be a Resolute Champion

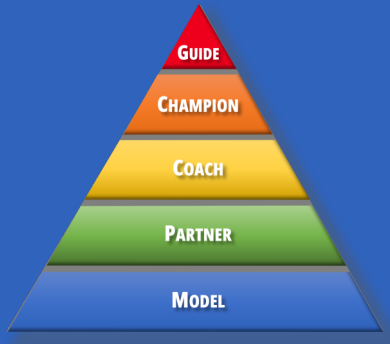
Energy and focus drain quickly when followers feel their efforts don’t matter. Leaders sustain a critical link between the goals of an organization and those doing the work to achieve them. As catalysts for high performance, they *Empower* capable performers to work free of unnecessary supervision or controls, while holding everyone *Accountable* for delivering results together.

Challenge 5: Course—Be an Inspiring Guide

Work today is complicated and changeable. Simply putting your head down and working hard might just get a lot of the wrong things done. Leaders look ahead, sharing with their followers a compelling *Vision* of a better future, then *Aligning* effort and resources on a confidence-inspiring path forward.

MODEL

CHALLENGE: CONDUCT



BE A CREDIBLE MODEL

...an example of what it takes to succeed in challenging circumstances, and the critical behaviours you expect of others.

“The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards they set for themselves.”

Ray Kroc

“Leaders are more powerful role models when they learn than when they teach.”

Rosabeth Moss Kantor

Path 01

Responsibility



“Choose to Lead”

Each of us has opportunities to lead, moments when something that matters is at risk, we see a way forward, but need the help and cooperation of others to make the right things happen. Some moments are subtle, the choices to be made easy. Many more are challenging, with choices that seem difficult, demanding, or potentially unpopular.

In those more challenging “moments of truth”, while most remain bystanders, leaders step up, saying what needs to be said while others stay silent, and getting things done despite difficulty and resistance. They choose to lead, their actions showing others they care more about delivering results and working well with their followers than they do about keeping themselves comfortable.

To choose *Responsibility*...

- Do what you believe is “right”, even when something else might be easier or more popular.
- Focus your attention, energy, and time on things that matter most, rather than low value activities.
- Match your actions to your words, living your stated values and doing what you promise others.
- Act where you can, rather than worrying or complaining about things beyond your reach.
- Own your part in problems, rather than making excuses or blaming others or circumstances for what happened.

Path 02

Learning



“Learn, Then Lead”

Leaders go first in situations that can be complex, ambiguous, and unpredictable. They must attract followers who, along with their talents and energy, bring a spectrum of preferences and needs. Leaders can’t trust static mental maps, fixate only on details, or count on doing just what was always done. Those that don’t learn and adapt won’t succeed for long.

That learning begins with self, appreciating how their own strengths, weaknesses, and blind spots affect how they lead. Prioritizing their own learning inspires others to be more flexible and creative, essential in changing times. Experimenting and taking reasonable personal risks helps to avoid stagnation. Capturing the lessons only experience can teach builds competence and resilience.

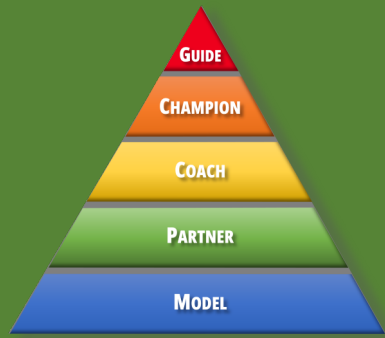
To engage in continuous *Learning*...

- Push beyond your “comfort zone”, trying new things and taking reasonable risks to get better.
- Be inquisitive, asking questions before jumping to conclusions or into action.
- Learn from experience, taking time regularly to reflect on what’s happening and capture lessons learned to avoid repeating past mistakes.
- Actively seek out feedback and advice, listening carefully even if what you hear is surprising or seems critical.
- Invest time and energy routinely in your own growth and development.



PARTNER

CHALLENGE: COMMUNITY



BE AN INFLUENTIAL PARTNER

...earning the power to shape others' behaviour and thinking by working in trustworthy ways *with* others rather than wielding authority *over* them.

"Trust is earned, respect is given, and loyalty is demonstrated. Betrayal of any one of those is to lose all three."

Ziad K. Abdelnour

"Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. It is precisely that simple, and also that difficult."

Warren G. Bennis

Path 03

Consideration



"Invest in Influence"

A leader's most durable source of "power" with followers is influence, the capacity to shape their actions and attitudes without relying on coercive or manipulative tactics. That influence is hard-earned over time by the leader doing or saying things that leave a positive impression on others, while avoiding negative interactions where possible.

To be perceived as considerate, followers need to see and believe that the leader...

- *Respects* who they are and what they bring to the job, especially when there are differences.
- Is *Reliable*, that they can have confidence in the leader's words, decisions, and promises.
- Values *Reciprocity*, is willing to "give to get", and find mutually satisfying ways to work together.

To demonstrate *Consideration* consistently...

- Take a genuine interest in others, who they are, what they want, and how they prefer to work.
- Treat everyone with courtesy, kindness, and respect, regardless of who they are.
- Listen carefully to understand not just what others say, but what they really mean.
- Be flexible, adapting appropriately to others' preferences and expectations where you can.
- Confront conflict with others in a timely, constructive way, rather than avoiding them or speaking behind their backs.

Path 04

Authenticity



"Be Your Best Self"

You can't "fake" it as leader. Leaders are just too visible, observed, and important to get away for long with being anything but themselves, sincerely and whole-heartedly. Behaving in ways out of sync with their true selves drains away the energy and credibility leaders need to be at their best.

Authenticity starts with asking, "Who am I—really?", then letting others see the best version of the answers found. Leaders do what they believe is right, even when no one is looking. They tell their truth, so others respect the honesty even if they don't like what they hear. They treat others as they expect to be treated, so others will respond in kind. They show their own vulnerabilities, so others feel safe. Leaders don't have to be perfect, just genuine and growing.

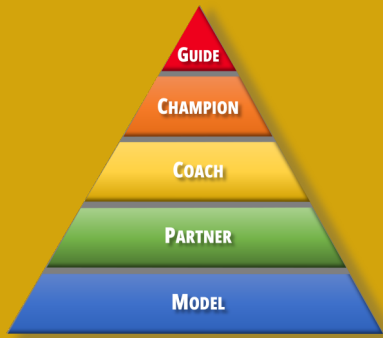
To present to others with *Authenticity*...

- Share personal stories and insights appropriately to help others understand you and your intentions.
- Make clear what you care about most—values, goals, preferences—then align your actions accordingly.
- Act with humility, acknowledging your own short-comings and seeking help when you need it.
- When it matters, speak up clearly and confidently to say what you know, believe, or need.
- Make promises carefully, committing only to what you believe is possible and you fully intend to do.



COACH

CHALLENGE: CAPABILITY



BE A SUPPORTIVE COACH

...creating opportunities for performers to stretch to their full potential while standing up for their needs and ambitions on the job.

“Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others.”

John Quincy Adams

“Leadership is not about being in charge. It is about taking care of those in your charge.”

Simon Sinek

Path 06

Challenge



Path 07

Advocacy



“Challenge Everyone”

Change is relentless. Constant improvement and innovation are essential. People are key—if they don’t develop and grow, teams and organizations can’t. Leaders challenge their followers to stretch beyond the limits and barriers that have become familiar to them, both personally and in their work.

The right challenges don’t have to be new or big, at minimum simply expecting everyone to fit in and do their job. Performers who tackle suitable challenges acquire new skills and experiences that benefit both their careers and the organization’s resilience.

Reaching toward their full potential also provides a needed edge that energizes engagement and innovation. Make clear what is in it for them, and potential consequences of choosing not to step up.

To *Challenge* followers...

- Carefully assess the capability of performers for tasks assigned to them, both their ability and willingness to do what’s required.
- Play to performers’ strengths, creating opportunities for each to do what they do best.
- Set stretch goals, challenging everyone to strive beyond their comfort zone toward their potential.
- Create development opportunities so others can pursue their personal and career goals.
- Allow performers time and space to solve work-related problems and learn from the experience, even if they struggle or make mistakes.

“Support Down, Challenge Up”

There are problems in any job. Dealing with them can be a challenge, exciting, an opportunity to get people focused and working together. But recurring, unresolved problems are just “hassles”, sources of distraction or distress that drain away focus and energy. “Supporting down” means prioritizing the well-being and needs of followers. Working to resolve their most impactful hassles conveys to them that they and their contributions are truly valued.

Resolving hassles may require challenging up, engaging respectfully with higher-level decision-makers to share emerging information and advocate for the interests, ideas, and ambitions of followers. Encouraging their followers to challenge them helps a leader stay free of their own blind spots.

To *Advocate* on behalf of your team...

- Check in regularly with performers to discuss their work-related progress, problems, needs, and ambitions.
- Make certain everyone is treated equitably in dealings with the organization (e.g. pay, benefits).
- Share the concerns, interests, and worthwhile ideas of performers with more senior decision-makers, ensuring they are heard and acted on appropriately.
- Make clear, factual presentations of ideas, plans, and suggestions to gain stakeholder support for them.
- Encourage others working with you to challenge your thinking and choices respectfully if they see a better way forward.

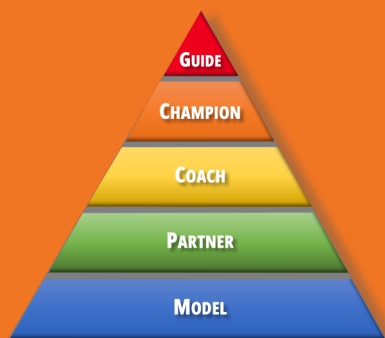
Icon created by Adrian Coquet of Noun Project



PATHS TO LEADERSHIP
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CHAMPION

CHALLENGE: CONTRIBUTION



BE A RESOLUTE CHAMPION

...nurturing a workplace culture in which performers are free to use their capability fully, and delivering results together matters.

"Leaders become great not because of their power, but because of their ability to empower others."

John Maxwell

"Failing to hold someone accountable is ultimately an act of selfishness."

Patrick Lencioni

Path 07 Empowerment



"Release Capability"

In our modern workplaces, you don't have to "give" performers power. They already have it in work situations that are often dynamic, demanding, and distant from supervision. Many also have education and experience that exceeds, or is at least more current, than that of their formal leaders. Those doing the work are often better positioned and prepared to decide what, how and when work is best done than the "boss" to whom they report.

Performers will be reluctant to contribute fully what they can unless they feel they have the autonomy and support to do what they feel is right. Whenever the situation allows, leaders create space for capable performers to fully use their wisdom and talents to get things done their way.

To *Empower* followers...

- Negotiate specific performance commitments, clarifying expected results and standards of behaviour.
- Delegate authority, trusting capable others to act and decide free of unnecessary supervision.
- Create conditions for success, ensuring those doing the work have the support and structure they need to succeed.
- Encourage initiative-taking and innovation, supporting those who take reasonable risks or make honest mistakes in pursuit of results.
- In words and actions, express confidence in others' capability to perform the work assigned to them.

Path 08 Accountability



"Make Results Matter"

Empowering followers must be balanced with achieving the organization's goals. When work is complex and fast paced, "just doing *your* job" is not enough. Delivering results reliably challenges all involved to rise above difficult circumstances and their own self interest to do what is needed, and do it well together. Blaming, complaining or sitting back waiting for someone else to solve problems cannot be acceptable.

Leaders keep shared goals in focus, making clear no-one's job is not done until results are delivered. They nurture a working culture in which all involved, from top to bottom, strive to keep their promises, answer for their actions, and collaborate with their co-workers to solve problems.

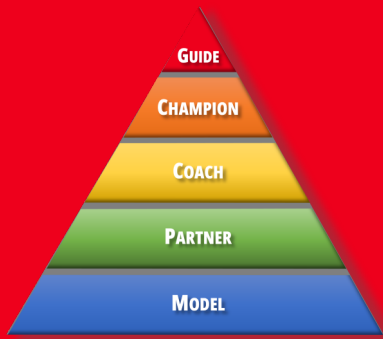
To nurture *Accountability*...

- Follow-up on performance commitments made, checking progress and offering support as needed.
- Make it safe to speak openly and honestly about progress, problems, and performance related to shared goals.
- Offer timely, candid performance feedback so those doing the work know where they stand.
- When performance is a problem, challenge all involved to own their part and make changes.
- When problem solving, focus on finding solutions for the future rather than punishing the actions and decisions of the past.



GUIDE

CHALLENGE: COURSE



BE AN INSPIRING GUIDE

...sharing a compelling picture of a desirable future then keeping people on the path toward making it real.

“A leader is one who sees more than others see, sees farther than others see, and sees before others do.”

Leroy Elms

“Building a visionary company requires one percent vision and 99% alignment.”

James C. Collins

Path 09 Vision



“Discover Your Path”

Until a leader declares where they are going, others have little reason to follow. Even the most cynical people want to know that their work matters, that it serves some purpose. When followers can see a connection between their efforts and meaningful outcomes, enthusiasm and commitment are more easily engaged. If they don't, work is not fulfilling.

A leader's vision should be rooted in an informed understanding of the current reality, and expressed as a clear picture of the future the leader, with the help of followers, intends to create. They may not always know the full way forward, but the vision they share should be compelling enough to get things moving so the path to success can be found as the realities of delivering results are revealed.

To express your *Vision*...

- Keep your head up, alert to opportunities, threats, and your capacity to respond effectively.
- Speak openly and honestly about the current reality, especially the challenges on the horizon.
- Challenge the status quo, constantly seeking better ways to serve the organization's purpose.
- Describe the desired results of any work or change effort, helping followers see clearly what is intended and why it matters.
- Express passion for the future and commitment to needed change in everything you do.

Path 10 Alignment



“Let Results Arbitrate”

In our dynamic, demanding work environments, focus can easily be lost. Obstacles and opportunities are always there to distract organizations, teams, and individuals from their intended results. Working without focus and discipline risks wasting time and talent. Misalignment, real or perceived, drains energy, not just from doing the work involved, but from doing too much that feels like it won't matter.

When people believe their leaders and co-workers are aligned with them on a common path, they more easily set aside selfish interests to pursue shared success. Leaders keep their vision of a better future upfront in followers' minds to propell action, sort what's needed from what's wanted, and to prioritize what should be done next from what can wait.

To sustain *Alignment*...

- Work with followers to set reasonable goals, milestones, and standards that define a clear path toward results.
- Offer every performer a meaningful role, drawing a connection between their work assignments and the larger goals of the team and organization.
- Meet regularly with followers to review progress, learn together, and set priorities so effort and resources are aligned with next steps toward results.
- Confront conflict amongst co-workers, working with them to find ways to both deliver results and serve their common interests.
- Actively support the efforts of other leaders and teams pursuing shared goals.





"Your brand is what people say about you when you are not in the room."

Jeff Bezos

TO PREVENT DERAILMENT

- 1) Constantly seek out feedback, especially from those you hope to lead.
- 2) Take advantage of development opportunities.
- 3) Deploy your strengths to balance or better manage a weakness.
- 4) Beware a change in role or circumstances with new requirements that can expose new derailers.
- 5) Care for yourself as much as you do for achieving results and caring for others.

Beware 10 Common Leadership Derailers

A “derailer” is a behaviour or set of behaviours that interferes with a leader’s effectiveness. These poor behaviours, sometimes habitual, can undo good work you have done to attract followers, or distract them from your better qualities. Most derailers are more likely to appear or become exaggerated under stress.

The impact of derailers is amplified by a feature of human perception: negative experiences tend to be more affecting and remembered longer than positive ones. In other words, even infrequent or what seem minor slips on your part can be disproportionately important in the eyes of followers.

Some derailers are rooted in flaws of character (e.g. a disposition toward dishonesty), and can be fatal to a career. Others arise out of weakness—skills not fully developed or applied infrequently. Often though, derailers are strengths over-done, too much of a potentially good thing. Your greatest assets as leader can create blind spots for you, or leave you vulnerable to the bad intentions or poor behaviour of others.

Here are 10 common leadership derailers to watch for in your own behaviour...

REACTIVE—*Followers see:* irresponsible; unprepared; distracted; blaming; making excuses; worrying rather than acting; overwhelm; reckless; rash.

INCONSIDERATE—*Followers see:* unfriendly; lacking empathy; insensitive; poor listening; selfish; playing favourites; tactless; bullying; taking undue credit.

UNINSPIRING—*Followers see:* lackluster; passive; complacent; stuck; apathetic; dull; unenthusiastic; bored; pressuring others to change; pushy.

MICRO-MANAGING—*Followers see:* interfering; untrusting; nit-picky; “my way or the highway”; meddlesome; intrusive; poor delegator.

MYOPIC—*Followers see:* short-sighted; blinkered; disconnected from reality; unaware; vague about the future; unsure where to go next.

CLOSE-MINDED—*Followers see:* stubborn; jumping to conclusions; defensiveness; over-confidence; arrogance; inflexibility; resistance to change.

INSINCERE—*Followers see:* two-faced; dishonest; underhanded; sneaky; manipulative; hypocritical; fake; exaggerating; political.

DETACHED—*Followers see:* unavailable; unhelpful; “one size fits all”; disconnected; uninvolved; aloof; bureaucratic; rulebound; passing the buck.

LENIENT—*Followers see:* soft; indulgent; easy; lax; soft-hearted; permissive; appeasing; accepting of mediocrity; tolerating poor performance.

UNFOCUSED—*Followers see:* absent; inconsistent; inattentive; scattered; procrastinating; indecisive; uncooperative; volatile; impulsive; undisciplined.



Learn While You Lead

“FLIP THE SCRIPT” ON LEARNING

It’s time to take leadership development out of the classroom and put it where it belongs—on the job.

Paths to Leadership

Coaching brings learning to leaders, where they need and can use it right away.

Anywhere

No time away
travelling to training



Anytime

Available when you
have time and need



On Target

Personalized process
and content



Active

Immediate on-the-job
application



No one is born ready-made to lead. Everyone has a unique set of strengths that help and weaknesses that hinder their leadership efforts. Each leader must find their own way, adopting habits of thinking and action that suit them, their situation, and the followers they seek.

New leaders need a mindset and skills quite different from what made them stand out as individual contributors. In fact, that past success can be their biggest barrier to doing what’s needed as leader. More experienced leaders must adapt constantly to the demands of our dynamic workplaces and the diversity of the potential followers found in them. What worked yesterday often doesn’t work today.

Leaders learn in action. Formal training helps, but learning to lead doesn’t happen in a workshop or by reading a book. Most of what you learn about leading is learned on the job, finding what works through trial and, all too often, error. Learning this way takes time, discipline, and just a little courage.

The route is well marked, the challenges along the way somewhat predictable. But, you must take that first step, the one where you step up and declare: "I need help."

We Can Help!

Paths to Leadership has grown out of 40+ years of training, coaching and working with leaders in a variety of organizations and at all levels. Our approach brings learning right to you, on the job, where you need it. To find out more, connect with Randy Parkin, Managing Partner of Key Consulting Group...

- **Phone:** 403.607.9888
- **Email:** help@keyinc.com
- **Schedule a free, 30-minute Introduction Meeting:** <https://go.oncehub.com/RandyParkin>



360 FEEDBACK

Thorough, direct
observations from those
who know you best



COACHING PARTNER

To listen, speak honestly,
offer practical advice, &
hold you accountable



VALUABLE INSIGHTS

Practical, proven ideas
fit to your style &
on-the-job situation



HELPFUL PRACTICES

Ready-for-use tips,
tools, and checklists to
guide application



Your Notes & Questions

