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You Need to Lead: Lead your way to success

Many years ago, I was the managing director of a large advertising agency in Sydney, Australia. When I first took on the job, the leadership team of working directors was in a slump. Some key clients had begun leaving us and other clients were reviewing their options. A series of poor decisions had left the staff with low morale.

Looking back, it wasn't the best time to become the managing director. But then again, it was the best time to become the managing director!

Realizing I was now in charge, I determined to get on with the job. This meant learning along the way, making decisions and taking the lead. As a leader, I realized I needed to take a number of actions that would achieve three results:

1. Create momentum—*positive forward movement*
2. Lift people to new levels—*encourage rather than*

criticize

3. Expand their thinking—*challenge rather than consolidate*.

So we reviewed where we were going. We set the vision for the company. We asked ourselves questions like:

What do we want to be known for?

What do we want to achieve?

As a team, we began to plan our future. And pretty soon I noticed that staff were starting to get excited. It gave me hope that the plane was about to take off. I felt like the journey had just begun.

Then we set in place short-term and long-term goals towards our new vision. These goals were realistic and showed us that our vision was achievable. The vision started to come to life, and we found ourselves saying for the first time, “We can *do* this.”

Next we outlined the steps needed to grow the business, to retain current clients, and to attract new ones. We determined who would do what and by when. The details began to become clearer. Everyone began to understand their role in the overall vision.

What a transformation from the bunch of people who previously had had such low morale. Now, instead of making statements like, “I wonder where I fit in?” and, “Does my boss

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see what I'm capable of?" each person in the agency could clearly see their role into the future. Now they could feel and say, "I'm important to our agency's success." It put a smile on their faces and a skip in their step.

Stakeholders began to notice we were very clearly going somewhere. The board, staff and clients started to respond to positive leadership and vision. During the following two years the agency experienced record growth. What a turn-around, largely because we invested time in building a vision for the future.

We *all* need leaders

It may not seem like it at first, but you and I *need* leaders. It's in our nature to look for leadership. Even though we often criticize our leaders, in reality we actually want someone to stand up and take the lead for us. We see this played out in politics, business and sport all the time. A *good* leader won't always be popular, but he or she will have a strong following because people look for someone prepared to take responsibility and to make the tough decisions. People will follow those who provide leadership that is going in a good direction. Without leaders, nothing worthwhile would be achieved. There would be no direction to follow, no order in society, no forward movement, and no vision for the future. This is essential to know if you want to build your business, your brand and your life.

At this point you may be protesting, “But I don’t have the right credentials to be a leader.” The truth is, you don’t need credentials or qualifications to become an effective leader. Most great leaders didn’t have the right qualifications, credentials or education. Benjamin Franklin had less than two years of formal schooling, yet at age 25 he founded America’s first library. At 31 he started the nation’s first fire department. At 36 he designed a heating stove that’s still in use today. At 40 he harnessed the power of electricity. At 45 he founded the nation’s first university. And at 79 he invented bifocals. He was an economist, philosopher, diplomat, inventor, educator, publisher and linguist who spoke and wrote in five languages. The chances are that you already have more education than he had when he was your age.

You’ve probably noticed that some people seem to have a natural ability for leadership. You’ve seen them. They work well in a crowd. They come to life in front of an audience. Everyone listens when they talk. That is certainly true, but even they have to work at being better leaders. We *all* have to work at it. The book of Proverbs says, “Work hard and become a leader; be lazy and become a slave.” (Pro 12:24 NLT)

To lead and succeed in any area of life, you need to have the key ingredients of leadership. I’ve studied great leaders over many years and discovered they all have certain characteristics and abilities. Here is a list of some of the qualities of effective leaders.

Leaders need commitment

Real leaders don't quit. They couldn't quit, even if they wanted to. It's not in their nature to give up. When challenges come your way, like these leaders you need staying power and determination to see it through, even when people are waiting for one single sign of weakness so that they can jump on you. Leaders are leaders because they stick it out. There is no such thing as a fly-by-night leader or an overnight leader. Leaders develop their leadership over time—through lean times and fruitful times. They grit their teeth and stay focused on the vision. They develop commitment to the cause that drives them.

When your family goes through tough times, they need you to show commitment. If you don't display true commitment, where else will your children learn it? Let me encourage you to stand tall during the hard times by staying committed to your family, your relationships, your vision and your dream.

Leaders need creativity

Horace, one of the greatest poets of the Augustan Age, wrote, "Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents, which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant." Problems bring out a leader's creativity. There is a story of a chicken farmer who had experienced several floods which killed his chickens. He was about to give up in despair, so he

told his wife, “I’ve had it. I can’t afford to buy another place and I can’t sell this one. What can I do?”

Calmly she replied, “Buy ducks.” Now that’s creativity in adversity.

A wise leader looks for a creative solution in every problem and then acts on it. I heard the story of a men’s hairdresser who had his store in the main street. His sign declared, “Men’s Haircuts \$20”. He did a good job and built a phenomenal business.

About six months later another men’s hairdresser opened up on the opposite side of the street with a sign saying, “Men’s Haircuts \$5.” The original hairdresser was approached by worried friends and family who advised him, “You need to reduce your prices to compete.” But he ignored them. Instead, he re-worked his sign. The next morning people walking past saw a new sign outside his establishment. It read, “Men’s Haircuts \$20—we fix \$5 haircuts.”

Leaders need compassion

People you live and work with can be demanding, difficult and draining, but without them you’ll go nowhere. True leaders know that if you don’t have a heart for those who work with you and for you, they will soon lose any faithfulness toward you and leave you. Be careful that you don’t get so passionate about the big projects, budgets and crowds that you forget

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to take care of the people around you. Compassion will go a long way towards keeping good people around you. And that's what you need if you want to be successful in your business, your brand and your life.

I once had a Gloria Jean's Coffees franchisee who constantly complained about staff and customers. One day, after hearing his complaints over and over, I said to him, "This business would be great without staff and customers, but unfortunately we need both." As a leader, learn how to enjoy people despite the frustrations they cause. Learn how to have compassion for your family, your work colleagues and even your boss. Do that and they will go with you for the full journey.

Leaders need desire

The desire to do something of worth and value is critical to leadership. It drives a leader through all kinds of challenges. Do you have that desire? You need it to become a leader. Desire will inspire you to grab your vision, to run with it and to see it realized.

Ask yourself these three questions:

1. What do I want?
2. Why do I want it?
3. How badly do I want it?

We have to move beyond the mentality of working just to pay our bills. We spend so much time at work that if our attitude is to ‘get by’, then we are wasting our potential in life. There is so much more to life than simply existing day to day. Leaders have a driving desire to achieve that carries them through the day. It brings life to what they do and to others. In fact, their desire inspires others.

Leaders need vision

The secret of great leadership is fairly simple: Do what you believe in, paint a picture of the future, go there and then people will follow. Australian speaker and author, Dr Bill Newman, in his book, *The Ten Laws of Leadership*, said:

“There is nothing that excites and motivates people like a vision to accomplish something special. Leadership is that unique ability to influence people to move towards goals that are beneficial and meet the group’s best interests.”

In 1899 Charles H Duell, then Commissioner of the US patent office, reputedly resigned after declaring, “Everything that can be invented has been invented.” This was obviously a man with no vision!

Contrast Charles H Duell to the great American inventor Thomas Edison, who set himself an ambitious goal: to come up with a major new invention every six months and a minor

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one every ten days. When he came to the end of his life, he had 2,332 worldwide patents and 1,093 in the US alone. Like Thomas Edison, a good leader never lacks vision.

Now, I'm not talking about vision statements. I have found that vision statements don't inspire great achievements—leaders with vision do. It's vision that inspires people, not superficial statements. It's vision that inspires individuals, churches, businesses, partnerships and even sporting teams. Just as a porch light attracts hordes of bugs at night, so too does vision draw people. It's the leaders who are the ones holding up that light, or that vision, and others are drawn to it.

Leaders need zeal and passion

Leaders develop a real passion for what they want to achieve, and that attracts followers. US author and theological speaker, Howard Hendricks, once said, "Don't put live eggs under dead chickens." That's what opportunities are to people without zeal and passion. You see, leaders make the most of opportunities. They get excited about opportunities, because they see a future in those opportunities for the business, for the brand, for the people working with them, and for their family. Leaders have a built-in passion for their company, brand, team, job and family.

But leaders cannot build a business, brand or life alone. To be successful, they need people to share their zeal. They need passionate people, not just people with talent alone. You will

often find gifted people with great resumes and qualifications who have never become successful in their lives or professions largely because they lack that one valuable ingredient: passion. If there is no passion and no real heart for the task at hand, success will flounder, no matter how talented the personnel. Zeal and passion make the difference. One of the keys to having zeal and passion is knowing your purpose in life, knowing that you are able to achieve something worthwhile with your abilities and talents, and knowing you are working towards a greater cause than your own.

As a leader in the advertising industry, I became passionate about each of my clients' products or services. I put myself in the position of feeling 'ownership' of those products or services. At times this even clouded my view of the disadvantages or the poorer aspects of each of the products. For leaders, becoming passionate about what you are doing and about your products and services is a given. The real leadership challenge is to inspire others to 'own' the product or service and to become as passionate about them as you are.

Leaders need courage

Your life will expand or shrink in proportion to the measure of your courage. If you are willing to take risks, you will go further than those who follow the safe and predictable path. When Nabi Saleh and I started Gloria Jean's Coffees in Australia in 1996, there were more risks than safe options. But we understood that in life and business *every* step was a risk to

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some degree. Some say the future is spelt R-I-S-K.

The great American writer Mark Twain stated, “Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear.” Courage is strength on the inside and the ability to stand firm and not panic when things go wrong. It is determination to hang on and not give up, even when you’re afraid. This means that every day in some way your courage will be tested.

I have learned this principle about courage: The higher the cause you are working for, the greater the courage you will have. If you know how important it is for you to succeed, the less likely it is that you will give up, especially if you know lots of people will be affected. So work towards things that have real value to you and you will discover greater courage to succeed.

As a leader, remember that people are counting on you—your family, your organization, your team. You will need courage to keep going for their benefit. If you give up, it will affect them. Keep reminding yourself of your dreams for yourself, your family and your business and you won’t be waylaid by the problems. Courage rises when the dream rises within you.

Leaders need trust

A true leader is one whom others trust. In the workplace, if you don’t trust your supervisor, it can be a demoralizing, miserable experience. On the other hand, if you are the one

leading others, you can lose their trust by acting inconsistently in what you say and do.

For example, do you place your own interests above what is best for the team or the company as a whole? Do you withhold or not communicate information to those under your responsibility? Are you consistently open and honest or do you find yourself telling half-truths or lies? Do you refuse to really listen to others and are you closed-minded?

My friend, Bob Gass, an American author and broadcaster, made this statement in his daily devotional book, *Word For Today*: “Trust is like a mirror—when it’s shattered it can be pieced back together again, but the cracks usually show.” Once when I was working in advertising I lost trust in a work colleague who was above me in the organization. I found my workload increased because I had to constantly re-check all his work, as well as contact the clients after their meetings with him to ensure they were not disillusioned or misled. It’s not an experience I would wish on anyone.

Trust is critical to leading your family. It’s worth investing in their trust. Don’t let them down. If you do, be quick to admit your mistake and ask for their forgiveness.

Leaders need competence

If you want people to have confidence in you, you cannot rely on hype and charisma alone. You need to show that

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you are competent. Simply doing your job well earns the respect and trust of others. This does not mean you have to do everything right all the time. It does mean you are open to learn and honest with people and that you communicate well and follow through on commitments.

When a leader displays incompetence, team members find themselves covering for their leader and solving the problems their leader creates. Not only does this impact on their own performance, but they also lose focus and take their eyes off the organization, its vision and values.

Leaders need loyalty

You can't build a great team without attracting loyalty, which is why it's important that you know something about it. Napoleon can teach us a thing or two about loyalty. When he was retreating from Moscow in 1812, his army of 600,000 was decimated. His men were killed or captured, they died of illnesses or they deserted. Finally only 100,000 men were left. These 100,000 men showed such loyalty to the Emperor that they threw their own coats over him to keep him warm while they endured sub-zero temperatures. Now that's loyalty.

Leaders are given the opportunity to become role models and to inspire people—sometimes to great commitment. The danger is that leaders can get to the point where they inspire or even encourage an unhealthy awe and reverence. The best leaders give their people the credit for the organization's

achievements, and in doing so they raise their people's self-confidence.

In 19th century America, Andrew Carnegie was the wealthiest man in the world. He moved to the USA from his native Scotland when he was a small boy, undertook a variety of jobs, and eventually ended up as the largest steel producer in the United States. At one time he had 43 millionaires working for him. In those days a millionaire was a rare person indeed. Conservatively speaking, \$1 million in Carnegie's day would be equivalent to at least \$20 million today. When a reporter asked Carnegie how he had managed to hire 43 millionaires, Carnegie responded that those men had not been millionaires when they started working for him. They had accumulated immense wealth *as a result* of working for him.

The reporter's next question was, "How did you develop these men to become so valuable to you that you have paid them so much money?"

Carnegie replied, "Men are developed the same way that gold is mined. When gold is mined, several tons of dirt must be moved to extract an ounce of gold. But one doesn't go into the mine looking for dirt—one goes in looking for the gold."

So how do you attract loyalty? By genuinely valuing the people around you. Try regularly encouraging them. It makes them feel good about themselves and their role. It gives them self-confidence. It boosts their self-esteem. And it shows that

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you value them. So take time out of your day to inspire them and appreciate their efforts.

Leaders need to establish culture

The personality of a business will come directly from its leaders. That's why it is so important to keep building your own character, because whatever your strengths are, they will be reflected in your family and your people. Unfortunately, the same goes for your weaknesses. Building a culture in any organization, including your own family, is reflective of who you are, how you deal with others, what you accept or reject, your standards of behavior and your business practice.

The founder of a business generally sets the values and standards at the beginning. If they are respected and admired, these values and standards will flow right through the whole business and will remain strong in that organization for a long time. If the values are strong, they will actually have a positive impact on the profitability of your business.

When a leader or founder decides to step away, step back or sell and a new leader comes into the organization, keeping the values and culture becomes more challenging. Maintaining the culture is always difficult, especially if the new leader comes from an organization that did not have the same values.

Some organizations and families, unfortunately, have no values or vision whatsoever. I cannot stress enough that they

need to be instilled in every organization, every team and every family. And yet when a new set of values and a new vision is introduced, they can create their own unique problems, because the current staff and family members then have to adjust to a new culture and a new way of moving forward.

I have seen leaders and owners of businesses write a great vision and set of values and publish them for all to see, and yet those same leaders do not live out those values or follow the vision in the way they relate to their customers, suppliers and staff. What happens is that the true character of these leaders is reflected in their staff, and *this* ends up becoming the culture. The words the leaders have written and recorded mean nothing if the leaders themselves do not practice them.

As I have already noted, the values and vision will come naturally from you as a leader. Bear this in mind as you ask yourself these questions in relation to the culture of your business or organization:

- Am I communicating my vision and passion effectively to my staff and family?
- How do my people deal with staff, suppliers and customers?
- How important is innovation in my organization?
- What quality of service or product is acceptable?
- Does my team or family speak positively about the organization to others?

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- How can I encourage and reward alignment with the vision and values?
- Does my team or family support each other at critical times?

Leaders need to recognize opportunities

If you are the type of leader who has a hands-on approach to your business and keeps in touch with what's happening in the marketplace, you will be in a better position to recognize changes and opportunities that affect your business' ongoing success. You will be able to recognize changes in customer attitudes and expectations so that the business can adapt more easily. New strategies and future directions for your business will naturally emerge from staying tuned into the changes around you.

If you lock yourself away in your office and you don't get out to observe your customers, competitors and employees, you will miss opportunities because you will never see them. A competitor will pick up on what you miss and take advantage while you are left behind. This also applies to not-for-profit organizations where it is just as important to make decisions about structures, planning, accountability and opportunities.

I visit our Gloria Jean's Coffees stores all the time and observe what is happening with new in-store promotions. Sometimes staff in the head office come up with great ideas,

but these ideas don't always work at the store level simply because no-one has actually spent time in the retail outlets watching and taking notes. You learn a lot from watching how customers use the store, how staff members are allocated store responsibilities, how franchisees manage their stock levels, and so on. Some great opportunities are missed, and some great plans are poorly executed.

Leaders need to keep momentum going

There are critical times when everyone starts to settle down. It tends to happen after a major success. Everyone has worked hard to achieve a goal, like winning a major contract or organizing a large event. Taking time to celebrate and enjoy the breakthrough is important, but complacency will easily set in if the focus then drifts. At these times it is crucial to keep the team going forward. Set the pace in the organization or the team so that the vision stays vibrant and strategies don't stagnate.

During my advertising agency days, we sometimes spent many months preparing a submission for a major new client. A lot of work and effort was expended in the process. When finally the results were announced, the inevitable elation would erupt if we won. Disappointment would settle in if we lost the bid. Either way, this was always followed by a 'let down' period as people relaxed.

This is when a leader needs to lift the flag and set the pace

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again. Back then I learned to recognize that my role as a leader was to re-ignite the team, which meant immediately setting the agenda for the next phase. If I didn't do this, lethargy would set in and we would face the real threat of losing clients. Bob Gass, the author of *Word For Today*, once stated, "*People want to work for leaders who fire them up, not put out their fire.*"

Leaders need to think expansively

Beware of consolidation periods. A leader must have expansionary thinking and learn how to manage growth. I often saw advertising agencies merge, creating one company from two existing agencies, effectively doubling their size. After approximately two years the new agency tended to shrink back to the size of one of the original agencies. Why? Simply because the leader tended to manage the business at the lower level of his or her own comfort zone. The leader could not expand or grow quickly enough to handle the new size. The business was larger than the leader and the leader didn't expand to suit the size of the business.

Learn how to think expansively and build strategies to grow yourself to handle the growth of your business or organization. If you don't grow yourself, your business or organization will outgrow you.

Leaders need to handle criticism

In any race, whether in sport or politics, the attention is almost always on the front-runners, not on those out of contention. Highly visible leaders are also highly targeted. A leader attracts attention, so get used to it. You'll face public and private criticism, media challenges and internal disputes. Criticism is inevitable, so learn how to handle it. Effective leaders learn how to function in difficult environments and not lose focus.

You will find a lot of help in this area in chapter 13.

Become a better leader

So far I've described the attributes of effective leaders. I've outlined what it takes to lead well, whether you are leading your own family, a team of staff or an entire organization. You may have recognized some of your own leadership qualities in the list. I hope you did. In any case, the good news is that you can continue to grow into a better leader by adopting and developing these qualities. You don't have to be born with these talents and abilities, you can acquire them along the way.

Here is another list of lessons I have learned to improve leadership ability, starting with valuing other people's input.

The great 17th century scientist, Isaac Newton, said this: "If I have seen a little farther it is by standing on the

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shoulders of giants.” Leadership recognizes the contribution others make to the vision of the organization, the team or the department. Lachlan Murdoch, elder son of media mogul, Rupert Murdoch, once said, *“Some of our line employees have developed innovations, in their own time, that have saved us hundreds of thousands of dollars. These were things that our senior management would never have thought of.”* Australian businessman Gerry Harvey said, *“I have not seen any business that really uses their staff well. Employees are a large resource so why limit yourself to your own ideas?”*

You may not believe it, but people actually want to contribute to the organization. They want to come to work every day and feel good about their job. They want to be proud of the company they work for, the products and services they produce, and their contribution to the community. When they achieve success and when they are recognized for their efforts, they thrive. That’s human nature. Tap into that truth and release the people around you to do what they really want to do: contribute to the greater cause. And, along the way, build a highly successful business.

When a business is run exclusively from the top, all the decisions will rise to the top. This causes multiple challenges. Staff lower in the hierarchy do all the background work, present their ideas or solutions and then wait for approval. This can take time because in top-down organizations there is often a bottleneck of decisions waiting to be made at the

top. After a period of time, important decisions are delayed and sometimes even re-made because the conditions have changed. As a result, the business stagnates.

Nokia, the Finnish mobile phone giant, experienced a dramatic downturn in its market share largely because its organizational structure squashed critical decision-making processes. For a company in the fast-changing field of IT and telecommunications, this spelled death. Nokia's competitors, like Apple, began releasing leading-edge products before Nokia because they were getting critical decisions made by leadership far more quickly than Nokia.

This type of situation creates frustration for staff who eventually give up trying to offer new ideas or solve problems. Some very capable staff may even leave for other more promising jobs. Staff no longer see themselves as valued members of the team, but simply as cogs in an ever-rotating wheel. They begin to lack confidence in making any kind of decision. In fact, they eventually don't even make the most basic business decisions like authorizing the stationery order.

The leader ends up drowning under a massive load of work or gives directions on the run. Many of these decisions are misunderstood. Mistakes are made and tempers are lost. Communication suffers, and yet there is no time to stop and explain or to talk things through. Fear of what the leader will think rules the mindsets of staff. They develop wrong assumptions as to what might or might not be approved by

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the leader. A whole aura of unhealthy mystery and myth is generated. Eventually the leader can become Staff Enemy Number One. The vertical height, as opposed to horizontal depth, of this type of organization will often be based on the capacity of the person at the top. Ultimately it will topple if that person cannot support the load.

Sharing and growing leadership

Some organizations are better at sharing and developing leadership. In a structure of shared leadership, responsibility and decision-making is shared or delegated. The leader's role is one of management, motivation, controlling the business direction, assessing people's leadership skills, placing them correctly and growing their abilities.

Your business or organization will only grow to the extent that you develop leaders who work together to carry the load. Transform your leadership philosophy from 'do it this way' and 'do what I say' through to 'let's do it together' and 'tell me how we should do it'. Shift your leadership from a mentality where every decision and responsibility has to be made at the top, to one where decision-making, responsibility and vision are shared. That way leadership can grow and initiative is rewarded.

In this environment, the benefits are many.

1. Positive changes can be implemented quickly and

mistakes can be fixed more easily.

2. There is a sense of ownership amongst staff and everything becomes 'our' business.

3. People are motivated to succeed in order to gain more responsibility.

4. The business attracts better staff. Those who enjoy the challenge of leadership join the team.

5. A sense of confidence develops within the team as good decisions bear fruit.

6. The leader's role changes from doing tasks to directing the vision and strategic plan. The leader is freed to work on the business more than in the business, enabling that leader to see opportunities and challenges ahead of time and so to respond and take advantage of them.

7. If managed correctly, the 'boss' in this situation becomes the person to look up to, and the leaders under the boss who fail to delegate become targets.

8. Better communication leads to fewer misunderstandings.

Building leaders within your organization isn't just a matter of training. It happens even more by example. There will be some with natural talent in this area who need to be given direction and opportunity, while others will 'grow' into these roles.

Hiring the right people

Your staff or team might look like a bunch of misfits, but what's important is that they are the *right* bunch of misfits. We understand from the New Testament that even Jesus' disciples looked like a tribe of misfits pulled together from different places, backgrounds and skill sets. But they had the winning ingredients: They were motivated, capable, open to learn and ready to do whatever it took. If you have a team like that, then you've got a winning team.

Now, they won't last in the team forever. At times some of them will need to move on. If they don't make the change themselves, you will need to do something to facilitate the change. Learn to recognize when someone is holding back an area of the business or organization or department. There are times when we wait for people we shouldn't wait for. It seems every organization has people who continually cause conflict or stress for those around them, and these people don't seem ready or willing to change. Pastor Joel Osteen of Lakewood Church, America's largest and fastest growing church, is quoted as saying, "*Your identity is not tied to those who walk away from you.*"

Because I recognize I will never have the capacity to know or understand everything, I've learned to hire the right staff and consultants. I've learned to hire people who are more experienced in their field of expertise than I am, people who have not just been around a while, but who have done what I

want to do in my business and gone where I need to go in my business.

Good leaders hire people who are better than they are in certain areas. I've worked with leaders of departments and organizations that continually hired people who were not going to perform exceptionally well in the positions they were given. I came to the conclusion that they were doing this because they were insecure and didn't want anyone to show them up as inexperienced or incompetent. In some cases, they didn't even realize what they were doing. I have found that if you hire people better than you, they will solve problems, they will increase the profitability and performance of your business, and they will actually make you, as the manager or leader, look better than you really are.

One of our franchisees one day shared with me the problems he was having with a staff member at his store. This person seemed to cause constant conflict with her workmates and the other staff were unhappy working with her. The franchisee was in danger of losing some good people as a result of one troublesome employee. Yet he could not face letting her go. In fact, he had never fired anyone before and the stress was giving him sleepless nights. After some encouragement and advice from me, he finally made the change. He later shared with me that, having done what he needed to do, he was sleeping like a baby and the other staff members were happy and relieved. The tone of the store changed dramatically. When I looked

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at his sales figures following this change, it was obvious that they had grown substantially. One person had been holding his business back.

There will be times when others join your team to take you to the next level. There will be times when existing people grow into leadership roles or are trained to take on higher levels of responsibility. As a leader, you need to be constantly tracking these developments and identifying the right people for the right roles at the right times.

Building generationally

To build a lasting business you need to think across generations. Remember that the customers and staff of the future will not be the people you deal with today. And the team you put together for this year's challenges may not be the ones who can deal with future challenges. So you will need to build in plans for transition, because to remain competitive in the long term and to generate continued growth you need to welcome changes in thinking.

Your younger team members need to be given the opportunity to shine. Consider them as future leaders within your business. You need them to bring fresh thinking and new skills and to help attract younger customers. You should also empower them to challenge the status quo and keep you on your toes. There are definite differences in the way each generation thinks and works, so learn to recognize these differences and

work with them to benefit the future of your business.

Delegating through leading, not doing

How many times have we heard someone say, “It’s quicker and easier to do it myself.” I’ve often said it as well. And yes, this is probably true most times. And in the beginning of a business or project this is essential. In any case, you may not have anyone to delegate to.

Believe it or not, it’s actually hard work to delegate, to train someone or to hand over tasks you have been doing for so long that they are now easy for you to perform. The challenge is to step back and watch, because sometimes you’ll see others perform the task in a very different way or with total disregard for your trusted methods. Sometimes you’ll see them fail and re-do things that you could have done instantly. For some, the worst insult of all is to find a new staff member who does the job better and quicker than ever. (Keep in mind here that members of the Y generation are capable of some amazing technological know-how.)

Yes, it is difficult to hand over projects and tasks, but without doing this you will find that the volume of work will overwhelm you and then no-one will be able to help. The trick is to let people make the job their own. Unless you are delegating a database operation where the procedures are standard, everyone will develop their own style. All you need is patience. Expect performance, but don’t dictate everything

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be done exactly as you would do it. Eventually you won't be able to do without them.

Often there is actually a better way to do what you are handing over, it's just that you have been too bogged down or too limited to think of it! So allow and encourage creative thinking. Don't feel threatened when your old methods are replaced by more up-to-date ones. In fact, encourage this kind of problem-solving, because it could save you a lot of money.

The bottom line is this: You can't do everything. If you insist on doing everything or making every decision yourself, your team will never grow. In fact, potential leaders will become frustrated and critical and will leave. You will end up with a group of 'yes' men and 'yes' women—people who are incapable of decision-making and who simply process what you tell them. I have met quite a few people with this leadership style and it certainly puts limits on how far they can grow, whether in business, in a government department, or even in a church setting.

If you can't delegate, you will only grow to the limits of your own time and capability. Then if you want a holiday, or if you get too busy or become ill, work piles up and nothing moves forward. In Exodus chapter 18, Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, challenged Moses to delegate his overwhelming responsibilities to capable men. Jethro gave him this advice: "If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.

Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said.” (Exodus 18:23-24)

When you give others responsibility, let them make their own decisions. Don't constantly butt in. Realize that no-one will do the job the same way you do it. But perhaps that could be a *good* thing. There are going to be some mistakes made along the way, even with the best people in charge. But step back and allow these people to learn without undue interference from you. This not only frees you to move forward and lead, it also makes room for good people to grow to the next level. By doing this, you will keep them rather than lose them to another employer.

Lead yourself first

I was challenged when reading some great leadership tips by American author and speaker, Dr John C Maxwell, in his book *Leadership Gold*. He was asked this question at a conference in a question and answer session: “What has been your greatest challenge as a leader?” Everyone was surprised with his reply. His answer was this: “Leading me! That’s always been my greatest challenge as a leader.”

He went on to explain:

“If we really examine the lives of King David, George Washington or Winston Churchill, we will see that they struggled to lead themselves well. That’s why I

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say the toughest person to lead is always yourself. It's like Walt Kelly exclaimed in his Pogo cartoon strip: 'We have met the enemy and he is us.'"

Leading yourself requires self-discipline

It is said that in this world we either discipline ourselves or we are disciplined by others. The challenge is to keep growing in self-discipline and not give up. Often leaders will reach a certain level of success and then stop growing. It becomes too difficult and they lose the will to continue the fight.

Successful leaders don't plateau or become static. In fact, great leaders are not satisfied with themselves. They always want to grow in key areas. They are very honest about themselves and have the courage to discover and overcome their shortcomings.

Leading yourself requires continuous improvement

A study of 90 top leaders in all fields came to the conclusion that it is the capacity to develop and improve their skills that distinguishes leaders from followers. The researchers also came to the conclusion that leaders are perpetual learners. So don't stop learning.

Understand that you will never know everything, even as a leader. Unfortunately, there are people who believe that great leaders have all the answers. I have personally found that

this is not true. Some people even believe you need to know everything in advance before you start a business or before you get married—in fact, before you start anything in life. I realized early in my life that if I knew every single thing I needed to know, I'd never start anything. Only God knows everything, and I'm not Him. That's why, whenever I am unsure about a problem or a challenge, I read, I explore and I ask questions to find out more, and only then do I make my decision.

It doesn't matter how young or old you are, you have no excuse not to pursue knowledge to improve yourself. In my teenage years I had limited exposure to resources to build up my leadership capacity, and yet what little I could get my hands on helped me to make decisions, avoid disasters and keep a positive attitude. I have discovered that no learning and no experience in life, whether good or bad, should ever be wasted.

Chapter 6 unravels a lot more on this topic.

Leading yourself requires humility

Those who are 'full of themselves' won't attract anyone, no matter how many successes they have. In his book *The Ten Laws of Leadership*, Dr Bill Newman stated: "*One of the surest evidences of greatness is a humble spirit. A humble person can neither be put down nor exalted. They remain the same under all circumstances.*"

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Leaders can easily have blind spots in this area. For instance, some leaders, without realizing it, give the impression of being overbearing or self-centered. Leaders need to watch this. It is wise to ask someone you trust to watch you and to pull you up whenever you need an adjustment in humility.

Lead like a thermostat

Are you a thermometer or a thermostat? A thermostat changes the temperature of a room while a thermometer just measures it. Like a thermostat, an effective leader should be changing the temperature of the organization so that it leads in the marketplace, not just follows trends in the marketplace. As a leader, you have an amazing opportunity in your hands to change the temperature of your organization, your team and your family.

Then there's the thermometer leader. This type of leader, like many politicians, spends so much time checking the temperature of customers or voters that they miss out on opportunities to lead. Politicians are very good at this. They often conduct polls and then base their policies on the current trends. This is not leadership.

I often quote Bill Bernbach, who was part of Doyle, Dane and Bernbach (DDB) Advertising. Bill once made this statement: *"We are so busy measuring public opinion that we forget we can mold it. We are so busy listening to statistics that we forget we can create them."* Now there's nothing

wrong with knowing the temperature of our customers, our organization or our industry. In fact, this is quite important. But too many leaders are tempted to overdo it.

My challenge is this: Place less emphasis on what is happening around you and more emphasis on setting out a business plan to change the temperature around you. From time to time you will achieve more satisfying results by putting aside your market analysis and placing more faith in your own products, your own marketing strategy, and your own business plan. Lead the way. As Kevin Costner declared in the movie, *Field of Dreams*, “*If you build it, they will come.*”

Working with various personalities

You need people who will build your organization with you. Now, they will all have different qualities and personalities. And hopefully you will find a wide range of characters on the team. There were many times when I joked that you didn't have to be a nutcase to work at Gloria Jean's Coffees, but it definitely helped!

Even amongst the people around you who are committed and passionate there will be personalities that annoy you. Welcome to managing and leading a team. The first thing you should do is assess the personalities in your team. Often the people you need in your business are those who have strong personalities. They are usually the ones who come up with creative ideas and who can actually make them work. These

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people are the drivers of projects. They get the job done and challenge the status quo. From time to time they will be hard to manage, and often they'll need a strong hand. However, these people can develop into effective leaders if they are well directed.

Other staff may lack confidence and need encouragement, but they will prove to be real assets if you invest in them and boost their self-esteem. Others enjoy a varied workload to keep themselves interested in their job and thrive on new challenges. By contrast, others don't like change and variety. They thrive on stability and will do well if given lots of work, as long as it is familiar work.

You will want a variety of personalities on your team because they will complement each other and you. So make sure your team is varied, but also make sure you know them and learn to manage them to get the best out of each one in the long term.

There are two types of people you can certainly do without. The first one is the Homer Simpson type. These people only do the bare minimum to keep from being fired. They show little interest in their jobs and often display a perverted view of their employer. They take time out to eat doughnuts whenever they get the chance and avoid responsibility whenever they can.

The second one is the Seinfeld type. These people are

self-absorbed, narrow-thinking and critical of everyone else. They may have some valuable skills, but generally they don't work well in a team, can't form lasting relationships, and tend to focus on their own needs. They can become the centre of gossip and dissention.

A leader makes decisions

A leader also needs to know how to make decisions. In fact, it's the leader's responsibility to make decisions based on the best advice that is available at the time. A great lesson in wisdom is found in the book of Proverbs: "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." (Pro 15:22) It's very easy to seek advice from legal counsel, accountants and management consultants. These are experts in their field and you pay them good money to provide you with the best advice. As a leader, it's smart to seek advice and to conduct research.

If you are making decisions based on your accountant's or lawyer's advice, recognize that their advice is mostly going to be conservative, detailed and selective and it will come with many caveats attached. On the other hand, management consultants are a different breed. They are best used as sounding boards. They can really help point out opportunities and issues for you to address, and they can guide you in making strategic decisions.

At the end of the day, you need to step up and make the call.

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As a leader you have to make a decision based on the advice and feedback from your advisers. I have seen too many leaders, especially in smaller businesses, defer their decision-making to legal counsel, accountants and other professionals. That's not leadership. If you defer to others to make the decision, you cease to be a leader. Leaders have responsibilities, and making decisions is one of them.

Here are a few tips for leaders wanting to make effective decisions:

1. Simplify and clarify the issue. In other words, what is the problem or issue really about? What choices do I really have?
2. Get the facts and ensure they are accurate. Make sure you're not working with assumptions, which happens far too often. Get the facts and base your decision on those.
3. Don't be pressured. Some decisions can be made quickly, but avoid making decisions on the run.
4. Determine the risks. If there are risks, find out what the worst thing is that could happen. If necessary, get solid legal and financial counsel, but beware of letting these people make the decision for you. You are the leader and you don't have to go in the direction they recommend.
5. Ask yourself: What effect will this decision have

on my team, my family and others? Will it affect my business and life for years to come?

6. Then ask yourself: How do I feel about it? Am I at peace with this? Your gut feeling is often right.

A leader develops maturity and wisdom

In his book *Leadership Gold*, John Maxwell lists several points that define leadership:

- The willingness to put oneself at risk
- The passion to make a difference with others
- Being dissatisfied with the current reality
- Taking responsibility while others are making excuses
- Seeing the possibilities in a situation while others are seeing the limitations
- The readiness to stand out in a crowd
- An open mind and an open heart
- The ability to submerge your ego for the sake of what is best
- Evoking in others the capacity to dream
- Inspiring others with a vision of what they can contribute
- The power of one harnessing the power of many
- Your heart speaking to the hearts of others

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- The integration of heart, head and soul
- The capacity to care, and in caring, to liberate the ideas, energy and capacities of others
- The dream made reality
- Above all, courage

Leadership guru John Maxwell likes to equate leadership development to crockpot cooking. In other words, it takes time, but the product is worth the wait. There is no such thing as instant maturity in leadership. Maturity is molded over time. Maturity does not happen by accident. It is a purposeful journey over rough hills and low valleys.

Remember, you are leading people, not robots. So knowledge alone won't cut it. You don't lead by knowing lots of information. Instead, you have to know how to inspire others. And to be honest, they will often know more than you do. But what they really need is wisdom.

If you want to know how to get wisdom, Proverbs 9:10 tells us, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." There are many who believe, and I am one of them, that real wisdom can only be found in God Himself. The wisest man who ever lived, Solomon, gained his wisdom from God.

Here are some tips to growing in maturity and wisdom:

- Learn from leaders you respect. Watch how they deal

with circumstances, how they inspire others, and how they handle criticism or difficult issues.

- Learn how not to lead from the mistakes of others rather than your own! Work out how they could have done better.
- Listen to good leadership teaching from people who have been successful. Personally, I have found the best leadership teaching in the Bible. John Maxwell's Leadership Bible will also help.
- Keep open to change. Be open to genuine criticism. Don't close your mind to personal improvement or think you know enough to get by.
- Learn to bounce ideas off others. Develop mentors (those you respect) with whom you can share your plans and who can encourage or challenge you.

When I was given leadership roles early in my career, each step was a challenge. Leadership resources and encouragement were not easily available. I learned by trial and error what worked with people and what didn't. I was very thankful for a managing director who had absolute confidence in me. Over time I learned to build the confidence of people in my department. Through my own mistakes, I learned how *not* to solve disputes between staff members—like trying to keep sparring staff apart and happy (far better to have them confront each other and sort out their problems).

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Time offers its own rewards to those who wait. I soon learned what needed to be prioritized and what could wait. And it took time for others to accept me as the department head and for me to earn their respect. One lesson I discovered very quickly, however, was that a negative attitude did not generate healthy responses from work colleagues.

Let me finish with some excellent advice from one of the great leaders of the modern era, Jack Welch. In his book, *Jack: Straight from the Gut*, the former CEO of General Electric offered his six rules for successful leadership:

1. Control your destiny, or someone else will
2. Face reality as it is, not as it was or as you wish it were
3. Be candid with everyone
4. Don't manage, lead
5. Change before you have to
6. If you don't have a competitive advantage, don't compete.

Begin building your leadership qualities today

Take a piece of paper and write down your answers to these questions:

1. Who am I leading right now?

Peter Irvine

2. Who else should I be leading?
3. What positive changes can I introduce to the people and groups I lead?
4. Six months from now, what fruit should I look for as evidence that I have improved as a leader?

Now list five actions you can take which will improve your leadership this year.