
The Trusted Leader

3 Keys to Becoming the Leader
Others Want to Follow

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LEAD DEVELOP CARE



E-book Edition



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Introduction

I find many of us are like Seth. When it comes to his leadership responsibilities, the heart, desire, and intentions are there. But something's still missing.

Seth and I were sitting across the table from each other at a local restaurant enjoying breakfast and a time to catch up. He had a look of concern on his face. As I probed a bit, he shared his frustration with himself in his roles of husband and father. He wanted to be a better leader of his family. He was a man of character and operated with strong values. Still, sitting across from me like a deer in the headlights, his eyes pleaded for help.

“What does being a leader actually mean... practically speaking? What do leaders *do*?”

To better understand where he was coming from, I asked him to share his story. His leadership story. What was his model of leadership growing up? Not so much the ones he read about or watched on TV. What was his experience in his own family as a young boy?

Seth shared that he grew up in what he thought was the “normal” family setting. His dad, a WWII vet with a quick temper, rarely shared any loving emotions or engaged with his children. He tended to be a loner. As Seth and the rest of his family would be having dinner in the dining room, his dad would be in the den eating his dinner alone... watching TV. Whenever his dad had free time, he would go off to hunt or to work in his workshop in the basement alone. His dad seldom attended any of his sporting events. As Seth thought about it, his dad's father was much the same way. He was hard pressed to think of a single meaningful conversation with either of them.

“What do leaders *do*?”

Seth wanted to lead his wife and children differently. Yet, he recognized that some of the same patterns his dad and his grandfather had were true of him as well. He could be there but not there... physically present but somewhat disconnected... available but lacking initiative.

As I probed further, he indicated that his actual concept of leadership in his home was more like that of a first-responder. Available but relatively disengaged until the crisis alarm sounded.

I shared with him that being available for the crisis moments was commendable but that being an effective leader at home or work or wherever involved more.

What he needed was a way to rethink his thinking about leadership that would turn well-meaning intentions into demonstrable actions.

Seth needed to have the mystery taken out of leadership. In my own leadership responsibilities over the years, I've felt the same way he did. At times, it was more of a mystery to me, more assumption than definition, more confusion than clarity, more ideals than practices. This prompted me to evaluate my own experiences and the things I'd been learning. Some colleagues and I made a concerted effort to codify leadership principles, practices, and models so that we would be clear on what was leadership really entailed. Over the past three decades of leading and developing leaders, these models have become proven and effective ways of taking the mystery out of leadership and producing a different kind of leader...the trusted leader.

I shared with Seth that what he needed was an effective model that could be his compass always pointing to the essentials of people leadership. When I shared it with them, their response was the same. “Where was this model before? This makes sense. I can do this!” I call it the Trusted Leader model. In the rest of this e-book, I want to explain it to you and show how it can be applied.



Part One:

The Model

I find that few leaders have an effective model that shapes their understanding and practice of leadership on a day to day basis. When I asked Seth what model or framework shapes his thinking and priorities, he answered he didn't have one. Actually, everyone has a model whether they recognize it or not. For most, the one that drives them is the usually the tyranny of the urgent or the demands of personnel or the pressures of production. In other words, they are being driven by externals.

Most leaders are merely responding to what's hitting them.

Consequently, they tend to take a consumer approach toward those they lead that goes something like this in practice (though it would never be stated) "...we brought you on the team, you have a contribution to make, we expect you to make it, and if you can't, we will find a replacement."

In a family, this approach is often manifested in the desire for the absence of conflict. As one dad put it when I had asked him to assess his leadership of his family, "No one's crying, so I guess I'm doing pretty good."

Again, it's leadership by externals. Either using people to accomplish the bottom line or avoiding leadership by trying to keep the lid on the family dynamics.

Everyone has a model whether they recognize it or not.

It's time for a different kind of leader. A leader who initiates as well as responds. Who seeks to build others rather than use them. Who gets things accomplished while developing people along the way. To get there, we have to rethink our thinking about leadership. That's where our model comes in. It's a very simple model. It's easy to remember. I find I use it throughout the day as I lead and coach leaders. But, don't let its simplicity deceive you. It's quite effective. It has three primary responsibilities with further operational aspects that describe the *how* of each.

Here's the model:

LEAD DEVELOP CARE

It's really that simple. I have found from decades of leading people that every people leadership issue can be initiated or addressed with one or more of these three functions. What do they mean and how do they work?





Primary Responsibilities

Part Two:

I was asking one leader what his definition of the word *lead* was. He looked at me with an expression that seemed to say, “That’s so obvious. Don’t you know?” I held my ground as he stumbled a bit, trying to put words to something so commonly known. After some “well,” “um,” and “uh,” he finally blurted out, “Well, you know.” I smiled, looked him in the eye, and said, “No, I don’t know. Could you tell me?” He couldn’t.

I find this to be the normal response. Leadership clarity and understanding are more assumed and nebulous than we care to admit. Most of us haven’t clarified it to the point where it’s clear, useable, and shapes our practice. Let’s go a little deeper.

LEAD

Leaders have to lead. No examination of the components of leadership would be complete if this function were overlooked or assumed. It is more than facilitating. More than being a moderator or coordinator. It is active leading. It carries with it authority and power.

I like what Dr. Henry Cloud says in his excellent book, *Boundaries for Leaders*, when he declares to leaders, “You are ridiculously in charge. As a leader, in the end, you have what you create and what you allow.” His point? Leaders have more authority and power to lead and make things happen than they realize. So, use it! Leading is a both sobering responsibility and an awesome opportunity. How do we define it?

Lead defined:

Intentionally influencing and enabling people to accomplish a given task

Let me highlight a few terms. Don’t skip this section. Again, assumption can be damaging.

Intentionally - implies on purpose with initiative. It is both pro-active and responsive. It is moving into events, circumstances, and the future with intent. I’m sure you remember the old adage - There are those who make things happen. Those who watch things happen. And those who say, “What happened?” The intentional leader makes things happen.

Influencing - the power to affect. Have you noticed in almost every office there is the positional head of the office and then there is the real head? The one everyone looks to. Merely having the positional title does not always equate to the power to affect.



Enabling - to make possible. Have you ever had an unfunded mandate? Inspiration only goes so far. Leading effectively also carries the need to help enable those we lead to be successful.

Accomplish - to bring to successful completion. Leadership always begins with a task. Without a task, there is no need for a leader. And the goal of the leader is to actually complete the task.

Task - that which needs to be done. An old mentor of mine would often say, “Activity is no substitute for production.” Results matter. Being busy is not the assessment of accomplishment.

DEVELOP

Of the three primary functions of leadership, this is the one we find most lacking. And yet, we spend billions of dollars each year on “leader development.” And look at the results. The common questions still are, “Where are the leaders? Why are there not better leaders? With all this investment of time and money, why are the outcomes so dismal?”

Perhaps it has to do with how we define and try to produce it. Most leader development today is merely information transference.

Let me see if I can illustrate the problem. My twin brother would begin his English classes each year with a short lecture on how to juggle. With three tennis balls in his hand, he would share the three steps to juggling. He would repeat these three steps over and over as he demonstrated the process.

Then he would give a pop quiz. The question was, “What are the three steps to juggling?” Well, he had just covered it about twenty times. Virtually everyone in the class got the correct answer.

He would then walk over to someone who had answered correctly, hand them the tennis balls, and then tell them to go to the front of the class and juggle. Their response was universal. “But I don’t know how to juggle!”

“What did you make on the test?” he would ask.

“A hundred,” they would reply.

“No, you do know how to juggle. So show us what you know.”

“But I don’t know how to juggle!”

What was his point? Merely receiving information and then regurgitating it back in some form of assessment does not equate to actually being trained or developed in that area. We need to rethink our thinking.

Let’s begin by how we define Develop:

*Intentionally strengthening people’s capacity
to grow and contribute*

Again, let’s look at some terms.

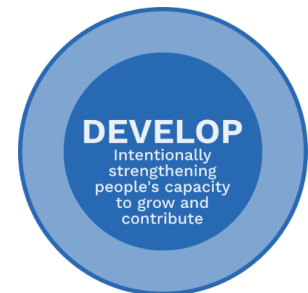
We’ve covered **intentionally**. The thing to keep in mind is that it doesn’t just happen. The saying that “more is caught than taught” is true only to a point.

Strengthening - implies improving on something that is there

Capacity - actual or potential ability to perform or contribute

Grow - to increase or come to be by degrees. Notice that we didn’t put into the definition the goal was to increase their capacity to produce. We have found that if people are increasing in their capacity to grow and contribute, then increased production is simply the normal outcome. But, oh, what a difference in response to the development.

Contribute - to give or furnish. We find few employees who really want to just put in the minimum hours to draw a paycheck. What’s lying just below the surface is the longing to bring who they are and what they have to the table so as to make a difference.



CARE

While we have found that the biggest function that is missing in leadership is Develop, Care is the one, when absent, that people feel first. Typically I'll hear those being led share how they know their leader cares for them. They just don't always feel that the leader cares.

Most of the time there is a distance between what is the leader's intent and actions. I've never had a leader say he or she didn't care for those they led. It just often doesn't come through in their actions. They translate their care through the intent of their heart while others only see the actions.

They need to rethink their thinking.

Care defined:

Watching over and responding to people's needs and well-being

To avoid assumptions, let me once again highlight a few terms.

Watching over - this deals with awareness and recognition. Many leaders just don't see what's before them. They are too busy or distracted with other things to really see. Others don't want to see. Humans are complex creatures. Some leaders feel it's better to view them as products that perform than as real people who have dreams as well as baggage.

Responding to - to exhibit some action toward. It's one thing to see. It's quite another to actually do something toward it. The lack of this reminds me of the old joke about the man who loved his wife so much he almost told her.

Needs - a lack of something wanted or deemed necessary. One of the leader's primary goals is to help those they lead be successful in accomplishing the task before them and making the best contribution they can. We all have needs. How can the leader meet some of those needs toward that goal?

Well-being - a good and satisfactory condition of existence. This is doing what is best for the person. It's helping those you lead know that you have their best interest at heart.

So, there you have the three Primary Responsibilities of leadership: Lead, Develop, Care.





Part Three:

Operational Aspects

To increase the functionality of each of these three, we have added an outer circle comprising four terms we call **Operational Aspects**. These are what operationalize the Primary Responsibilities.

LEAD Operational Aspects

Here are the operational aspects for Lead:

SET DIRECTION

ALIGN

MOTIVATE

MANAGE

Set Direction is about *target*. A leader must take time to think, plan, and figure out the direction to steer things. This is not something that is obvious and often the things that seem most obvious tend to be very short-sighted with no long term advantages.

Align is about *together*. It is to adjust according to a line. Getting everyone and everything moving in the same direction within the same boundaries. It is not an easy task. Too often we have the proverbial “herding cats syndrome”. To get alignment, what needs to be considered?

Motivate is really about helping people with the the *energy* they hold within. What do they have that really produces the energy to bring who they are to the table to make the contribution they long to make. It’s not about being a cheerleader, trying to pump up the team with yells and pompoms. I like to think of a firecracker. Everything that is needed for the firecracker to do what it was designed to do is inside it. What’s needed to launch it high into the air is there. The various explosives which produce the colors and the actions and noise are there. What it takes for all that to be released is someone to light the fuse. It’s learning who they are and what they’re good at and allowing them to utilize these for the situation at hand.

Manage is about *oversight* of the work of others. Many leaders fail because they see their role primarily as sharing the vision and then assuming the details will fall into place. A costly assumption. Instead of falling into place, they often fall apart. Here are four elements to consider.

An easy way to remember the key elements of Lead is with the acrostic— SAMM. ✦

DEVELOP Operational Aspects

I’m sure you’ve heard the illustration of the potential of the seeds in an apple. The question is, “How many seeds are there in a typical apple?” The answer? Generally five to seven. Then the question is, “How many apples are there in a seed?” The answer? It depends.

On what does it depend? It depends on what happens to the seed. Where do most apple



seeds end up? In the trash can or tossed out, never able to bring forth the fruit that was within them. As Benjamin Disraeli, British Prime Minister from 1874-1880, said, “Most people die with their music locked up within them.”

But what happens if you plant and water the apple seed? You cultivate and tend the soil. You fertilize and nourish it. You prune and shape it as it grows over time. How many apples are in that seed? Hundreds, maybe thousands or perhaps even millions if the process is repeated. The core question: what do you do with the seeds?

The people we lead are like those apple seeds. Their music, their potential, their best contribution will come out based in large part to what we do with them. They have a responsibility to engage as well. Yet, much depends on what the leader does with them.

It’s what we call leading with a developmental mindset.

To get at this, we have four Operational Aspects to direct us how to Develop:

DISCOVER

TEACH

MODEL

COACH



Discover - identifying. We have to know the “what.” What is the actual area of needed development? This can be a tough one as the list of possible areas is endless. Some topics to help get at this are: 1) what the job or responsibility requires. What development is needed to meet those requirements? 2) what you see in them. As a leader, you are in a unique position to see things they may not see. To not utilize your role in identifying these is ultimately to not care for them. The question is not, “Who am I to develop them?” The question is, “Who can they become with some development?” 3) What they see in themselves. Typically, most people can sense some area they’d like to grow in. Asking them can be very revealing. 4) What others see in them. This is not so much about gossip as it is about listening to how you’re hearing others are experiencing them.

Let me mention one other set of items that can help you discover areas of needed development. With the virtual endless list of possibilities, I have found over the years that I can place every development topic under one of three headers. I’m always seeing leaders through these lenses: thinking, behavior, and skills.

THINKING is how one thinks. As you’ve noticed, I keep mentioning this idea of rethinking your thinking. Why is that so important? Real transformational change and improvement in leader development does not occur at the behavioral level. Our behavior and actions stem from our values and motives. However, our values and motives come from our thinking and beliefs. Also, one’s thinking reveals the barriers to development. The person who thinks he knows it all won’t develop. The leader who thinks she can’t grow will not grow.

BEHAVIOR is how one behaves. In recent years, more and more companies and institutions are taking a new look at this arena. The popularity of concepts like emotional intelligence are due to the fact that how one behaves is often of greater consequence than how they perform. We have all known leaders who were very bright, competent, and personable. However, there was always something about who they were as a person that kept tripping them up and blocking their greater contribution or advancement. Gone are the days when a leader can simply get a pass because “that’s just the way she is.”

SKILLS are how one performs. These are the abilities and competencies needed to do the job well. Whether it’s improving as a public speaker or recruiting and building a team or how to do a better PowerPoint presentation, we can all improve on our skills.

Teach - information. We need information. To help others to rethink their thinking, they need new concepts and new content. Everyone knows something. But they need to know more. The problem today is that the transference of information is being equated with being trained. It's important but insufficient by itself as my brother's juggling lecture proved in his class.

Model - observation. This is the old apprentice approach to development. The young shoemaker, for example, would sit beside the older master shoemaker and watch what he did in making shoes. The master could also see what the younger apprentice was doing and where he was in his development. It requires presence and time. Today, we tend to rely too heavily on reports rather than letting them watch us and we watch them.

Coach - feedback. We all need feedback and perspective in real time on real situations for improvement to happen. That's what coaching affords. An experienced and somewhat objective perspective on observed behavior and thinking. As an old professor of mine used to say, "Instruction without coaching is a waste of time." I like to tell leaders that they may be good. In fact, they may be better than everyone else. But they will never be as good as they can be without a coach. +

CARE Operational Aspects

The Care part of leadership is really about turning heartfelt intent into demonstrable action. The variable is that when you ask the question of ten individuals what it means for them to feel well-cared for, you will get ten different answers. Still, I find that there are four critical Operational Aspects to Care that ring true for everyone. Let's look at them:

KNOW CONNECT PROVIDE PROTECT

Know - the awareness and recognition of people's needs and well-being. This is harder than it appears because it requires time, effort, and a refocusing of our attention from ourselves to others.

Connect - the ability to communicate that one understands and vicariously experiences the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of others. A similar idea is that of empathy. This is a really tough one to get. Often leaders try to alleviate discomfort in others by saying there's really no reason for them to feel that way. That may be true. Connecting with someone doesn't imply that you necessarily agree with their thinking. It does mean that you understand their feelings and concerns.

Provide - making sure that they have what they need for success. You don't necessarily have to provide everything, but often the leader is in a position to provide things that those they lead can't get for themselves. These include such things as opportunity, access to needed resources, or feedback and assessment.

Protect - looking out for the best interest of others and providing a safe and predictable context for them. Leaders have a unique position and capability to take those they lead "under their wings" so to speak. I saw a photo where a herd of water buffaloes were being menaced by some lions. The buffaloes took an amazing position. Four of them butted up against each other so that every direction was covered. I wonder if the expression, "I've got your back" didn't find its origin in this maneuver? However, as survey after survey illustrates, people don't leave jobs, they leave bosses. They don't feel that their boss has their best interest at heart or the boss doesn't create a safe and predictable environment.





Conclusion

The Trusted Leader is one of capacity, competence, and trust, who gets the job done and also develops and cares for those he or she leads. Who wouldn't want to follow this kind of Trusted Leader?

I have found that virtually every people leadership issue can be traced back to one of the essential functions of our model (or some combination of them)— lead, develop, or care. As I'm listening to a leader or am assessing a leadership situation, my first question goes back to this model. I ask, "Is it primarily a Lead issue? Or a Develop issue? Or a Care issue?"

Once that is determined, I go to the outer ring of that function. What Operational Aspects need some attention? What are the next steps to getting there?

My hope is that this e-book is more than inspirational. As we like to say, "Insight feels like change." Real change comes from putting it into practice. Try it. Use it in your own leadership arena. As you journey, follow us as we send out resources with more practical insights, tools, and practices that will help take the mystery out of leadership.

