

CHAPTER 1

Self-Leadership

“The path to authentic leadership is a story, a dance, and a journey of self-discovery. But the real challenge is that choice to take the first step, and then to learn when to let others help you take those that remain.”

– Sam Strickland, Senior Vice President and
Chief Administrative Officer, Booz Allen Hamilton

This chapter presents ideas on self-leadership as the foundation to leadership. It shares some of the experiences I’ve had delivering leadership training and development programs over a seven year period. Midway through the chapter, you are asked to do a “quick” assessment of your own self-leadership capabilities. This will give you a baseline to know where you’re starting from and decide where you’d like to make improvements. Additionally, this section represents a foundation for everything that follows in the other chapters.

Leadership Definition

We all tend to operate based on mental models which are images, assumptions, and stories we carry in our mind about self, others and the world. Sometimes these are called frame-

works, mindsets, or paradigms. They often guide how we approach and react to situations in our life experience. There are mental models about our nation such as freedom; the greatest country in the world, etc. Of course, there are people in other countries who hold different mental models about Americans and our role in the world. There are mental models about organizations, for example, National Rifle Association, Habitat for Humanity, Boy's and Girls Clubs, Microsoft. There are mental models about types of employees such as federal government workers, salesmen, teachers, and engineers. We have mental models about learning. Some believe it only happens in a classroom and is teacher-directed. The point is that some of these frameworks can be accurate or inaccurate; expansive or self-limiting.

For over seven years, I've done an exercise in training classes where thousands of participants were asked to write their own personal definition of leadership. Afterwards, they discuss their answers at the table and form a group definition of leadership. Ninety-five percent of the time their definitions of "leadership" are a list of characteristics of a leader, such as a person who inspires, motivates, communicates, charismatic, visionary, etc. Ultimately, this exercise demonstrates that many participants mental model of leadership is the person and position of a leader.

I always ask the group, as I'll ask you, if you or anyone's mental model of leadership is the person and position of the leader and you don't have that position, what does that mean for your self-leadership? Well, it means you may not develop the leadership qualities for yourself. Why? Because subconsciously it seems you may expect the leader to be and do those things. Many people seem to depend on a spouse, parent, supervisor, teacher, manager or leader to lead.

Have you ever thought or heard someone say: “Let them take the responsibility.” “That’s why they get paid the big bucks.” If you’ve ever thought those kinds of thoughts and didn’t “step up” to responsibility, when you could have, what’s the impact? Usually, when I’ve done that, it means I wasn’t willing to take the responsibility to be the best I could be in that moment. If that’s true for me, then could it be equally true for you in certain situations? We need a foundation on which to build our leadership.

Foundation of Leadership

There is no universally agreed upon definition of leadership. Generally, leadership has to do with “a process or ability to generate personal power to influence one’s own self and others to take action and achieve results.” In my experience, that’s done through the qualities of trust and respect. Many people want to be the “formal” leader. Yet, how many persons can be the CEO of the company? How many people can be the Manager on the team? How many Principals at the school? Only one person! So everyone cannot be the formal leader. However, if your organization’s top leader were to enter the room and we ask her or him “do you want leadership demonstrated throughout all levels of the organization?” What would they say? Yes! Of course they’d say YES. How is that leadership developed? What is that foundation to formal leadership? It’s self-leadership.

Self-leadership simply means leading one’s self. It means self-direction, self-accountability, and self-control. If we work together and through observation and experience you see that I don’t come to work on time, don’t meet deadlines, and don’t keep my word. Then might you come to the conclusion that I can’t lead myself? Based on that conclusion, would you let me lead you across the street to get a sandwich? Probably not.

Why? The lack of self-leadership leads to a lack of trust and respect from others and within one's own self. If an individual really doesn't trust and respect himself, then he won't earn those qualities from other people.

What if I could show you a formula that, when applied, would guarantee you develop more of your self-leadership to accomplish the results you want in life? What would that mean to you? How would your life change? What would you do with it? When would you use it?

Formula for Self-Leadership

Let's begin by building the formula backwards with the end or desired results in mind. The first block on the right hand side of the formula is desired results. What is the one thing that's needed to achieve desired results? _____ = Desired Results. Some people say you need a plan; or a new attitude; or knowledge. Each of these things is important. However, none of them, by itself, will ensure desired results. Consider the fact; you can have a plan, a new attitude, and knowledge but still not improve results. Lack of knowledge is not the issue. Sometimes we just don't do what we know we should, need to, or can do. The one key element to achieve desired results is behavior change. Without changing your behavior in the direction of the desired results, then you only get the same outcomes you're experiencing now. A desired result means you want a different outcome. Action and behavior change is the only way to get it.

What is the normal "human" reaction to change? The majority of people resist change because of fear, denial, rationalization and a host of ego-based responses. Therefore, we need a process or system to help us overcome fear to change behavior and achieve the results we want. The remaining elements of the formula are:

Knowledge (positive thoughts) + Attitude (positive feelings) + Skill (daily practice) + Goals (focus for action) = Sustained Behavior Change = Desired Results

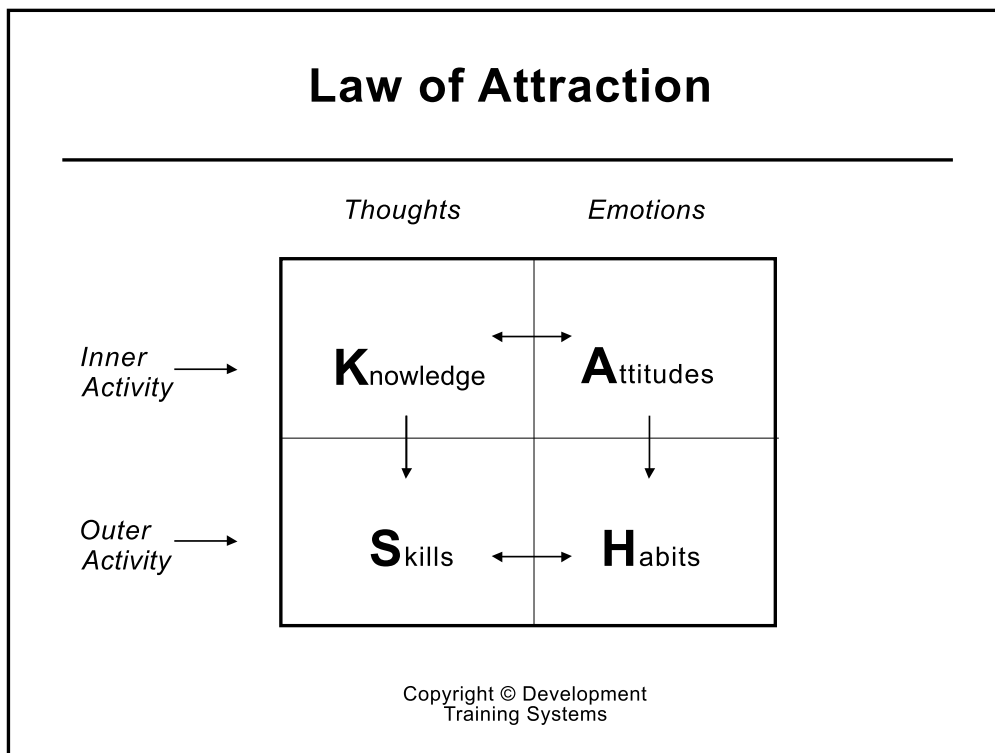
Again, it's not a lack of knowledge and skill that keeps us from results. Everyone has knowledge and skill to some degree. What keeps most of us from full achievement is something lacking in attitude development and clarity of goals. I define attitudes as internal perceptions and feelings. Our attitudes are our inner feeling world. Generally speaking, are most people's attitudes positive or negative? Unfortunately, they are negative. But, how does that happen? Usually from negative conditioning that began early in life (childhood) and continued throughout adulthood.

Where do attitudes come from? Inevitably, when certain values and beliefs are repeatedly seen, heard, thought, and spoken they program our subconscious mind and affect our "feeling" world. Therefore, how we feel and what we think is conditioned, programmed, and trained. Some might call it brainwashing. Simply put it's learned. Negative conditioning leads to negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Positive conditioning leads to positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The process is the same whichever direction one takes it.

Another important thing to remember is that **attitudes (internal perceptions and feelings) lead to behaviors which lead to results.** The conditioning that you do to yourself goes deep into your subconscious mind, below conscious thinking. Studies show that 80% to 95% of our decisions are made subconsciously. This realm of thought is a lot more powerful than we've been conditioned to believe. Most people believe the conscious thoughts or knowledge is the most important. Yet, it seems the opposite is true.

Knowledge (knowing what to do) opens the door to developing skills (knowing how to do). However, neither one of those qualities ensures that a person will actually do what they know. Subconscious attitudes are the fuel, frequency, vibration, and energy which compel us to action and attract everything to us. This is a Law of Attraction.

The following chart is one way to show this Law of Attraction. What's happening on the "inside" is knowledge (thoughts) and attitudes (emotions). When the knowledge is applied, then you develop skills. When the attitudes are applied, then you develop behavioral habits over time. Skills and habits are outer activity that result from using what is "inside." Since the emotions are the powerful vibration and energy, the best way to shift patterns of behaviors is to first shift the attitudes or feelings.



Law of Attraction

A common example of how this Law of Attraction works is the person at the job who is not performing well. He or she has knowledge and skill, but for some reason their attitudes have soured toward the organization, managers, and/or co-workers. Those feelings affect their behavior in a negative way. In time, you may hear this employee say things like: “I can’t get promoted around here.” “The boss doesn’t like me.” “They’re out to get me.” Well, is there any wonder why that person is not getting promoted? Clearly, their negative attitudes have affected their behavior and infected the entire work environment. Eventually, it could lead to them being fired. If that happened, would it be the result of knowledge and skills OR attitudes (feelings) and habits (behaviors)? Clearly, it’s the attitudes and habits that cause 90% of firings in the workplace. Since these attitudes are so important, let’s look at seven of the top attitudes that have proven to get results, when applied to behavior. I call them the Seven Self-Leadership Practices.

Seven Self-Leadership Practices

Through life experience, I’ve discovered there are seven primary values, beliefs, attitudes that are major drivers for a successful life and career. When one lives these concepts, life seems to work better. When one chooses not to live these concepts, life seems to be more difficult. These seven self-leadership practices are: **Courage, Persistence, Positive Mental Attitude, Self-Discipline, Self-Confidence, Self-Esteem, and Integrity.** Below is a brief definition and discussion of each strategy. As we discuss them I ask you to rate yourself on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) on how well you are performing each of these practices.

1. *Courage* – to try new things, risk failing in order to succeed; and work to overcome obstacles in your way.

If you choose, it's easy to let fear rule your life. It's easy to let your subconscious patterns rule your thoughts, feelings and behaviors. It's easy to stay stuck in those patterns and give up trying to improve. It's easy to allow fear to keep you from trying new things. It takes courage to overcome fear. It takes courage to make a decision and set a goal! It takes courage to make a plan! It takes courage to take action! It takes courage to overcome your fears! How do you rate yourself on this one? _____

2. *Persistence* – try, try, and try again until you succeed!

Challenge your self to be motivated and to work hard to achieve your goals. If a person wants water from a well, they've got to prime the pump. There may be other people looking at him and not seeing any water. They may think he's crazy. But, he keeps priming the pump. Why? Because he believes there is water down there. Of course, the deeper the well, the more effort and energy needed for priming the pump. With persistent effort over time, he gets the water he believed was there all along.

I believe the key to persistence is commitment to the process of putting effort and energy toward your goals; not the outcome or result itself. Life demands that you put something in before you can get something out. "Putting something in" may mean doing it poorly until you learn how to do it well. If you work long enough, fast enough, hard enough; what you want will flow and gush forth to fill your containers to overflowing. How do you rate yourself on this one? _____

3. *Positive Mental Attitude* – consistently, moment by moment, think positive and focus on what you can do, rather than what you can't, don't, couldn't, shouldn't, and wouldn't do.

This practice deals with what you say; listen to; and watch to develop and maintain your positive mental attitude. The goal is to strive for 100% positive! This requires monitoring your speech. Language is the first and most important door to attitudes and feelings. As you pay attention to your language, notice how often you use the words not or can't, don't, and won't. Do you talk more about what you can't do and aren't doing rather than what you can do?

Often our attitude is influenced by what we put in our minds and heart through our senses. Therefore, it's important to put the best possible "information and energy" in your mind and heart. There are two dominant factors that influence what you put in your heart and mind and will determine the difference between where you are today and where you'll be five years from now. Those two factors are: 1) the books you read and 2) the people you associate with. I would offer two suggestions. First, read positive material at least 30 minutes every day. This will contrast all the negativity in the atmosphere from the news and people's conversations. Second, hang around positive people. Physically sit with them and learn from them. If you can't sit with them, then read and/or listen to their positive messages of inspiration, motivation, and upliftment. How do you rate yourself on this one? _____

4. Self-Discipline – develop strong values, morals, and self-discipline to do things right and do the right things.

“He who has mastered his senses is first and foremost among men. All virtues reside in him. God manifests Himself through him. Such is the power of self-discipline.”

– Mahatma Ghandi

Relating to Ghandi’s quote, it seems that self-discipline is involved with self-control of the senses. We access information and energy through our five senses: sight, hearing, taste, touch, and feeling. How can we control our tongue? We control our tongue by controlling our speech – the words we say. We control our tongue by what we eat and how much we eat. We control our sight by controlling what we look at with our eyes. Controlling the other senses involves what we listen to with our ears and touch with our hands.

Through self-discipline and self-control you open your self up to experiences beyond the senses. Therefore, you move from tangible to intangible experiences. For example, talking can be tangible because it is sound. The ears hear what is said. The mind begins to create images to picture what is said. We experience them as something tangible, heard physically and seen in our mind. Yet, when one controls their speech and remains silent they open themselves to a broader experience. Silence opens one up to greater possibilities than just what is being talked about in the moment. Consequently, there is a different feeling when in silence (intangible) than in sound (tangible).

Another side of self-discipline is self-control of thoughts, feelings, and actions. Most of our thoughts, feelings, and ac-

tions are from subconscious memory. Approximately 88% of behavior comes from the subconscious mind. It's as if our thoughts, feelings, and behavior are on "automatic pilot." You can control your thoughts and feelings. It begins with a high level of consciousness or awareness of your current thought and feeling patterns. Through consciousness you can develop self-control and recondition your self to new patterns of feelings and thoughts. How do you rate yourself on this one? _____

5. *Self-Confidence* – belief in your self and in your abilities to achieve whatever you want to do.

The late great professional tennis champion, Arthur Ashe said: "*One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation.*" A friend of mine, Ray Overdorff says: "*Activity breeds self-confidence. Lack of activity breeds self-doubt!*" These quotes seem to suggest the more you prepare and take action, the more self-confidence you'll have. An example would be the contrast of preparing well for a test in school versus not being prepared. The more activity you take in the direction of your goals and dreams, the more self-confidence you'll develop. How do you rate yourself on this one? _____

6. *Self-Esteem* – appreciate your value as a person.

This one is all about liking and loving your self first. How can you tell if you like yourself? Do you feel good about yourself? Do you feel that you are an important person? When you are alone, do you feel important to your self? Are you liked by other people?

One of the key techniques for liking yourself and others liking you is by asking good questions and listening intently. These behaviors build rapport and good will with others. Everyone wants to receive some level of attention from others. Usually when you take a group picture and look at it, whose picture do you look for first? Most often, you looked for your own picture, right? So if you keep your focus on the other person, by asking them about their opinion, their interests, and their concerns and then really listen, you will build rapport.

That is easy to do when you like the other person. Yet, how often do you ask yourself questions and really listen to yourself? Do you really like yourself enough to take heed to your own thoughts, feelings, and direction from within? OR do you find yourself giving more attention to what others think? I would offer you to consider the relationship with yourself as much more important than your relationship with others. By talking and listening to yourself, you can build rapport with your self and like your self even more.

How do you talk to yourself? Is your self-talk as positive as when talking with others? If not, what does that mean? There are three most important phrases we use when communicating with our loved ones. These phrases are: 1 – I Love You!; 2 – I Need You!; and 3 – I AM Proud of YOU! If your relationship with yourself IS the most important relationship, then when is the last time you've said these words to your self? Can you say these words to yourself? If you can; do it now!!! Put down the book and say it right now!!! Your Name, I Love You! Your Name, I Need You! Your Name, I AM Proud of YOU! Say it again. Say it with emotion 7 to 9 times.

Did you allow yourself to do it? Did the statements become more believable every time you said them? How did it feel to say that to your self? If you find difficulty doing that for your-

self, then how can you expect others to do for you what you're not willing to do for yourself! Can you give away something you don't have? **DO IT for YOU! Thereafter, you'll be able to DO IT for OTHERS! The more you like yourself – the bigger goals you'll set – the more you'll bounce back – the more you'll persist. YOU'VE got to PUMP YOUR SELF UP every day!** "I like my self...I like my self...I like my self...I AM important!...I AM important!...I AM important!" *By keeping your self-esteem high, the quality of your life will improve because you are changing inside.* How do you rate yourself on this one? _____

7. Integrity – develop a reputation for keeping your word with yourself, your family, your friends, and your co-workers.

One evening, I attended an event and heard a speech by an executive from Marriott International, Inc. He was talking about leadership and said: "Develop a leadership brand based on integrity and trust...it's all about how you are viewed as a "leader" and how individuals on the team perceive you." I was intrigued by this concept of "leadership brand." It seems to me that type of branding means creating the perception in the minds of people that you have one or two special unique qualities which set you apart from everyone else.

There are many examples in the world of athletics of "leadership brand." For example, Cal Ripken, the Hall of Fame baseball player, was known for his work ethic and dedication. He played in 2,632 consecutive major league baseball games over a 17 year period. What would it take for you to come to work everyday for 17 years? That is a powerful brand. Other athletes are known for their will to win and ability to make the "right" plays at the "right" time. Two sisters, Serena and

Venus Williams are world champion tennis professionals because they demonstrate the will to win. Tiger Woods is another example of this quality.

Find a couple of superstar qualities and focus on developing greater strength in those areas. Continue to build on them and develop them further to “Perfection.” This idea of a leadership brand will determine the health and quality of your performance and relationships. Relationships are the fuel to your leadership. Everybody loves a winner. Ultimately, your leadership will be judged on integrity and directly impact how much people will trust and respect you. Are you trustworthy? How do you rate yourself on integrity? _____

Now that you’ve rated yourself on each practice, circle the one or two you are strong in. Then answer this question:

What is one action you can take to strengthen those strengths?

Next, identify which one or two of the practices you are not strong in. Then answer this question:

What is one action you can take to improve that quality?

After writing the answers to these questions, then take action.

For the remainder of the chapter, I’m introducing one of my coaches. In fact, this person was the coach that put me on a new path of self-discovery and achievement.