SECRET ENTOURAGE

Entrepreneur BOOK SERIES™

CHECK MATE

THE 16 RULES OF LEADERSHIP

Table of Contents

At some point in our lives we have all worked under the supervision of top-level executives ranging from a Supervisor to the CEO. As they are considered our superiors, we refer to them as **The Manager or The Boss**. We often criticize the individuals we work for when things do not go their way and who rapidly forget the good quality of executive role they carry and that is expected of them. However, reality remains that there are more frequent individuals who are within leadership roles and yet know very little about the basis of leadership and what it is all about. Apparently, there is a disconnection in society that does not seem to evaluate the difference between managing and leading. There seems to be less and less true exemplary leaders that can carry the title and role.

Being in a leadership role entails many responsibilities—many of which are often not spoken of or discussed, as they have nothing to do with the corporate priorities of your employer. These responsibilities can be life changing for those that work beneath you or for you, as their lives are very much in your hands.

Many of us have had the unfortunate dissatisfaction of working under improper management or leadership. We have experienced the dramatic difference it can make in our day-to-day lives and its effects, though there have been times which we perceive management to be terrible or leadership to be incorrect on the basis of what we know or believe in. This perception is often made based on misinformation or emotional detachment from that individual. Now that the tables are turned and you are in the position of Owner, CEO, Manager, or Supervisor, this is the moment where you have to become the role model and example and not fall under the category of **defective leadership**, which can create a disconnection between you and your employees.

I have put together the main core competencies and the different leadership traits you need to display on a day-to-day basis to ensure you are living up to your title and responsibilities, as well as to exceed in your business results.

1. Leading vs. Managing:

I have been asked if I knew the difference between a leader and a manager? If I thought every manager was a leader? During those moments, these questions would make me analyze and think about the difference between the two. I would look at their job descriptions and research the leadership qualities that existed in each title and position. My friend, who at the time was my manager, never gave me a direct answer but expressed that in due time it would make sense. It took me a few years to understand exactly what he meant. Finally, when it all came together it opened my eyes and perspective to a whole different level.

I want you to take a moment to really think about the one thing that differentiates a manager from a leader…

I also want you to think about the level of responsibility you take with each role…

Still cannot figure it out? It can be summed up in one word: **ownership**. Ownership is the main driver that differentiates the roles and responsibilities of a leader. Leadership exists in all of us in various scenarios or for various reasons.

- *Example: You are a car expert and decide to purchase a car for your mother. You will not stop until you have the perfect car at the perfect price. You simply will not buy the first car offered without analyzing the offer further and in more detail. In other words, you do not stop at the first possible solution but are in the constant pursuit of perfection until you feel the results you have obtained are as perfect as it will get for you.*

Ownership has plenty to do with being considerate and generating more than just results that you are asked to create. Taking ownership in the world of business means owning your business to its full potential, to go above and beyond for your business in order to succeed, and recognizing those that will work for you which will make your business a success. When you calculate the amount of hours worked or the minimum/maximum goals that were or were not obtained, all of that will no longer have value as long as you feel that your business has and always will deliver its best to its customers. Those facts are what come to mind when thinking of ownership.

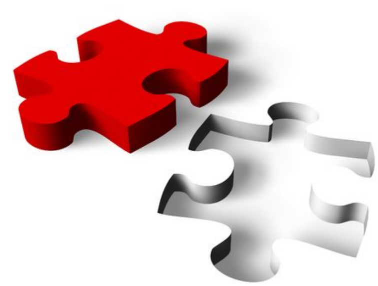
- *Example: You are the manager, and you have a party to attend to Saturday at noon, though you know business is open on Saturdays to service customers. The individual you had assigned to provide coverage in your absence as manager for the day called out sick, and the place is left without any management. You are now left with the choice to call and see what corporate wants you to do, and whom they can send to replace you, or simply do not make a move as it is not your turn to work Saturday. Yet, as being chosen for this role you immediately become the leader and have to reflect on it. Therefore, you cancel your plans, rush to work, and manage your business until it is closed and do not worry or question why someone was not available to replace you.*

As a leader, you have to understand and take the initiative to keep your business running and profitable, regardless, even if you are just a manager. You must also possess the mindset that you will have available at hand the reliable and growing talent that can replace you as you develop into the next role. Making accurate decisions and foreseeing the overall image differentiates the leader from the manager. In most instances, business owners and entrepreneurs are leaders as they take ownership of their own lives and choose to do something about their own success. Their roads are not always easy and may not be very experienced leaders, but nonetheless they showcase the traits that leaders acquire in their actions.

Are you leading or managing?

To answer this question, ask yourself if you have created a visualization for your business. A vision that is aligned to the corporate priorities that your organization is positioned to complete, yet one that is yours and yours only. If so, you are leading by owning.

2. The Human Connection: Expectations vs. Results:



As mentioned above, the list continues on differences between leaders and managers. Ownership of the people and the business at hand are the dominant responsibilities for a leader. Employees that begin working for your business will not know who you are or your style of work but will be told what to do until they grasp and understand the concepts that make up their role. When you meet a new employee for the first time, it is equally important that you make a lasting impression as they are expected to do in their interview. This initiation sets the tone for what is expected from the potential new employee and from you as the employer.

- *Example: A potential employee walks in for their interview; however, you are not present and running late. You finally arrive and the interviewee sees you relaxed and joking with everyone. This employee gets the impression that there are no guidelines and that it is a very laid back environment which does not enforce goals. If he gets hired, it will be hard to change his perspective of the work place, perhaps making him disengaged when asked to do his job during down time.*

"If people believe that they can get away with just the bare minimum, they will do just that."

It is human nature to get away with easy strategies unless they have to do otherwise. Therefore, from the first moment someone walks in and meets you, your image needs to represent a leader that is in control of his environment. Having clear expectations of those individuals and guidelines to follow, it ensures that you are aware of what people must do to be worth their salaries.

Set expectations for your employees, set the rules on how you expect them to do business, and **HOLD ACCOUNTABILITY** for everyone at all times. The instant you allow one or two rules to be broken, you are opening the possibilities for everyone to disobey your rules and structure their own way to run your business. It is very difficult to change someone's mindset once they are used to looking at things a certain way, though it is very simple to mold them correctly right from the start and creating that human connection. This is actually impossible if you are the immediate Owner, as there is no separation between the business and you. Now, moving on to those that work in a corporation within leadership roles.

We often make the mistake of reverting expectations by expressing words like "we," or "the company," or "my boss" when it is all irrelevant. The individuals that are employed at your organization and under your leadership need to be at a level of perception and comprehend that they primarily work for you and that you are the originator of the regulations in the unit, region, market or wherever else you manage, lead, or control. Even by following under the company's general guidelines, this does not take away from leading in your own individual capacity to allow those you manage to identify you as their "boss."

The human connection is created when an employee chooses to believe in their leader's vision and see value in their work. If you can create that through your words, vision, and guidance, then you are doing a great job at setting yourself and that employee up for success.

3. The Broken Link:

Corporate America can be nasty at times and very unfair. There is a significant link between corporations and people, though the link has been broken for some time. Corporate loyalty is obsolete and does not seem that it will be resuscitated at any point in time. Despite being broken from a corporate level, it is yet very possible for one to gain his employee's loyalty through personal character. The link is broken primarily because of the lack in communication and the poor leadership that begins from the top executive level. The core problem persists in the fact that the management chain does not communicate precisely, all this leading from fear to lies and excuses, instead of the truth. Fear is the primary reason Corporate America will never understand the necessity of a connection it has to create for its employees in order to earn their loyalty. It will do what is best for itself and never take into consideration what and who matters most. This rule is not because the CEO is a heartless person but rather because these individuals are afraid to speak out to those that are the foundation of the organization.

When demands are provided from the top, the next level of executives does not dispute and simply comply with passing on these demands. As there is no real feedback given in either direction, these executives refrain themselves from expressing their suggestions or opinions. When hired, managers are taught to follow guidelines and not give their feasible opinion, for reasons that it would appear as an excuse to do as they please and would make them lose ground in their career. The individuals in these positions begin to build lack of motivation by not being able to evolve and show their true potentials. When their messages finally get across to the top, it becomes meaningless because there was no reinforcement behind it. This causing them to feel that everything can remain the same as it has been, which is strictly a lie created out of fear and insecurity given from six different levels of management that probably are all paid six figures. I tend to ask those that are in a top executive level to analyze and reflect on their role in the organization and to answer the following questions:

- *Why are you paid six figures?*
- *Why are you given authority?*
- *Why are you afraid to speak about the reality that goes on in your business?*
- *Why are you not able to comprehend suggestions and help create solutions?*

As a leader I challenge you to rethink differently within your organization and go above and beyond your expectations. Create results, communicate challenges and their realistic solutions, and finally, do not feel intimidated by your supervisor(s) or employees. You can put back together the broken link within your organization, unit, or team. It does not have to be repeated simply because others have been afraid for years. Remember that you are the leader that the employees expect to show results for; so, do not lose your people's loyalty through fear or lack of action around items you can influence. You have the authority to make business decisions, and you should use this to the fullest as you are expected to do. If there is a disconnection between companies and their foundation of employees, there does not need to be a disconnection between you and those you supervise. This will drive and motivate an even greater amount of loyalty, as these individuals will work twice as hard for you and not for the company—loyalty that will be kept for years, regardless of where you work.

4. The Mediator:

Everyone can be a great leader under perfect conditions and in perfect times where conflicts are non-existent. The reality is that leading a team is a relationship between you and your own team only. That in good times your leadership is never in question and all is perfect with the world, but it is in the times of difficulty that your true leadership skills will have to manifest themselves and where you will be truly tested.

Being a mediator is an important part of your role in leadership as internal conflicts can be very damaging if not contained quickly and in a polished manner. If the conflict revolves around you and your staff or between staff members themselves, it is up to you to resolve it and be able to contain it. As the leader in charge, you are the one that needs to be able to satisfy all parties or make strict decisions that may not satisfy any of the parties involved. This will help your business grow. Any type of conflict is damaging overall especially to those involved and everyone there. It is the employees that run your business, so their happiness and professionalism is the key to your success and your business. Satisfied employees create satisfactory results, but ecstatic employees create spectacular results. Conflicts create exactly the opposite.

Here are some quick tips on how to resolve conflicts:

- **Do not judge**: Similar to a court of law, you should not judge a situation until you have had the chance to understand it and have heard all parties involved. Previous history should not determine your judgment before you know all the facts so you should go into the situation without bias.

- **Be fair and without emotions**: Resolving conflicts within the business needs to occur in a fair professional manner and not out of emotions. Make sense of what is happening and how the situation should be handled, then determine based on people's actions who was indeed at fault, then follow up by recognizing the error (even if you are the one at fault).

- **Understand the basis of the issue**: Focusing on the immediate problem may not be the actual answer to the bigger problem. There might be more going on behind the scenes that does not meet the eye and not told all at once. Understand the people behind the conflict, their history with one another, and unveil the real problem.

- **Business first**: Before getting to the basis of the problem, contain it by setting expectations on people's behaviors right from the start to temporarily maintain the situation. This will avoid business disruption. Look at a resolution that will facilitate business, then the individuals involved. If a decision you make impacts your employee's comfort or if the emotions impact your business in a negative way, then it was the wrong decision.

- **Make a decision and explain it:** When you are ready to make a final verdict and have all the facts you need, that is the time to make the final conclusion to the conflict. Everyone is expecting a solution, as you are the person they know who has the final say on its employees in what goes in within the business. Respect and loyalty comes from you as the manager and then it becomes vice versa. There are times when a manager does not care much for explanations, even after the fact that a final decision has been made, which in some instances can be the correct thing to say. Though on top of having the mindset and authority of a manager, most importantly we need to think as leaders. Caring about people's perception, how people feel about working and growing for us, will cause better results for our employees who will then feel motivated to work for us, rather than be obligated to do so. Explain your decision to each party what your expectations are from each of them and how you came to that conclusion.

- **Move on:** Stay focused on the issue once you have made your decision, reinforce your ground if needed, and move on to keep business running as usual. If people choose to not release their resentment due to the fact that they believe the proper decision was not chosen, stay extra cautious and keep a close eye on those employees. Their emotions might get in the way and attempt to resolve things their own way, therefore, putting your business at risk. You may not satisfy everyone's needs when it comes to conflicts, though at the end, you have to decide what is best for your business and which employees will excel. If you know you have surpassed the job as a leader in the past, employees will trust in your decisions and will not lose fidelity. On the other hand if you have not, it will be more difficult to have your employees' confidence. Remember that you are in that role based on your experience, so follow your instincts.

Being a mediator is an important part of conflict resolution. It is not so much being a dictator where you just show up to correct and walk out. Conflicts will only get resolved when everyone is on the same page and understands both sides of the problem. Consequences will be mutual depending on the circumstance. Remember you are the authority that will bring resolution to keep that level of comfort and well being of your employees and your business.

5. <u>The Mentor:</u>

Being a great leader entails being a mentor. Being an impactful mentor can be difficult, but also very rewarding. Mastering the skill set of teaching others, getting buy-in, and helping people grow their talents in or out of the workforce is one of the most noble leadership traits that can be provided. It can come in handy in your day-to-day interactions with other individuals. Great mentors focus on four major areas of development.

1. **Mindset**: Your first role is to make sure that the employee's mindset is similar to yours and that you understand your mentee's personality and perspective on life. This helps you tremendously when setting expectations and growth plans with people. Understand what matters to them, how they work, and how they get motivated.

2. **Goal:** Understand the needs of those you are mentoring and what standards your see them at. Knowing what your mentee can achieve or can become helps in setting up a mutual mentorship program that matters to both of you. If someone's goal is to become a manager, then understand why they want to become a manger and what their ideas and understanding of that role is.

3. **Plans to reach goals:** Now that you have learned about your mentee's goals, do not stray away from them. Instead, set them up with your own goals that you feel they should also pursue. You might add to their learning curriculum if you feel they could be suited for a different role but do not take them away from their own goals. You do not want them to get too overwhelmed, which can probably push them away at the end. Setting up expectations, plan of action, and due dates help bring more importance to the preparation itself. Make sure to check in with your mentee quite often and that they are fulfilling their expectations.

4. **Deliver on your word:** One of the biggest mistakes made by mentors are the empty promises they make. Make reasonable promises and fair deadlines that you can guarantee to complete for your employees. Do not inform them that a promotion is eminent based on performance unless you are 100 percent sure that you can deliver. Planning out and making sure that you have all the appropriate steps in place to deliver on your promise is the only way that you can have 100 percent participation from your employees. Once you deliver for one person, others will realize that you are a man of your word and that performance and dedication will be well rewarded.

   Mentorship is a mandatory requirement in leadership. There are many reasons why you cannot cut corners or skip steps in this important part of your role. Taking ownership to help someone else reach their goals and dreams creates a serious human connection and a profound bond. This bond goes a long way as people tend to stand behind those that have led them in the right direction previously. In other words, people that care will want to work for you as they know they will benefit from it and at the same time realize where they need to progress on.

   Mentorship needs to occur on a level greater than just helping people succeed in the workforce. It needs to make the mentee feel that you are engaged to their plans, that they are valuable to anyone, and that they have knowledge of the business.

- *HINT: When you mentor individuals, you are building talent for your company. Do not be anxious to lose those that surpass to achieve their promotions. Promote folks when they are prepared to be promoted. New people will come your way, and they will achieve the same results. Do not refrain yourself from helping your employees move up, even if they take lateral positions. Often mentors get defensive about their role to believe that mentees need to remain under their sight at all times, which is completely wrong. Remember that people's potential is strictly in their own hands. In most cases, those you help will always consider you as their mentor, even when they surpass the emotional connection. These individuals will know that you are always someone they can count on and turn to as you helped them get through the obstacles to get where they wanted to be. Help them achieve their full potential, even if it surpasses yours. A good example of this is boxing. The boxing coach was once young, strong, and fast but now has grown older and lost strength. The boxer that he has now taken under his wing and mentors, intently respects and listens as he knows that his coach has achieved great power and experience through his lifetime of profession.*

6. The Decision Maker:

Decision-making is one of the areas that defines the level of ownership you take towards an issue. You can either make this really difficult for yourself or extremely easy. If your character cannot handle challenges and make decisions, then leadership may not be a field you want to follow. Being in an authoritative role means you have to be willing to make the decisions necessary to move your business forward. The business you run or your own is highly dependent on your actions and reactions. In business, it is not always simple to do what is necessary to prevail nor is it simple to always make determinations using your best judgment rather than emotions. Some of the key choices you have to make in leadership are mostly about your team and those that will make your business a success. This means choosing who to keep and who to let go, though this is not always easy. You also have to think about the circumstances in which you need to make tough decisions. After working in management for over ten years, you get to see a little bit of everything and under different perspectives—from those getting terminated for inadequate reasons and those that unfairly get to maintain their job.

Decision making connects back into what I call the broken link, which precisely demonstrates how bad decisions can lead to bad outcomes. By not facing difficulties that are ongoing, it can become effortless for the manager to get his employees focused on the mistakes. There is no difference when you are terminating someone promptly for their actions before it continues revolving within your business and other employees. Many managers spend a tremendous amount of time justifying why they should not terminate that individual, yet much of that reason being the fact that they are afraid of confrontation.

Being the decision maker entails two major responsibilities:

1. Make fearless decisions for the common growth of the business.

2. Caring for your team or team's reaction when making a decision.

In other words, if you know your team loves the new employee yet she must be let go, then preparing everyone for the change and being able to clearly state why the decision was made by you (not forced on you), will enable you to be viewed as a leader and not a follower. This process of allowing others to know when appropriate decisions need to be taken enables the employees to see the ownership you take. Refraining from speaking to your employees about the measures that were taken creates conflicts and fear for not knowing the reasons, which can cause unproductive employees.

Making appropriate decisions goes beyond those you hire or those you terminate. The main separation between Corporate America and employees is the fact that Corporate America sees black and white. We as employees, managers, or owners have the ability to see the gray area that makes sense for the business. Being fearless of the confrontation as well as, picking your battles to make correct business decisions, separates you from the company itself, once again showcases your authority and care for the business and its members.

- *HINT: Keep in mind that good business decisions in difficult situations drives major loyalty from your team as many of them would not feel comfortable making such decisions, opening up communications around the reasoning behind the decisions also provides major education for those looking to advance within an organization.*

7. The Teacher:

In most cases, you are the leader due to your experience, which is worth so much more than anything else you have to offer. Leveraging that experience enables you to earn respect and buy-in from your employees. Staff expects their leader to have much more knowledge than them and be a well-rounded individual. They are often eager to be taught more about the various aspects of the role BUT also about various aspects of the business at hand that may have nothing to do with their own individual role. As a leader, it is important to recognize that your first priority is to educate your staff on the right way to do their own job. There is nothing more frustrating for an employee than the feeling that they are expected to do or know so much, yet are not provided the training they need. The first order of business after someone is trained is to continue to educate them beyond the requirements that their role within an organization requires. There are two main things that come into play in educating employees:

1. **People are thirsty for knowledge**: Whether or not they like the topic, most will always want to be provided with more skills about something they currently are not in the loop on.

- *Example: You work in IT but have a strong background in finance and educate your subordinates on IRAs and 401Ks before it is time for enrollment. You do not sell them on it. You simply educate them on what their role is, how they work, and who benefits from it. You are now the "go-to" guy for any finance-related questions.*

2. **People feel empowered**: As people increase their knowledge of business as a whole, they feel as though they have grown as individuals, even if they have not grown into new roles or positions. This feeling creates loyalty towards the person that actually taught them to think properly and broadened their knowledge.

- *Example: You work in finance yet have an extensive knowledge in the car industry. A subordinate approaches you and lets you know they are about to purchase a car for $18,000. Your expertise enables you to get them their car for $10,000, and therefore, you helped this individual by educating her on what you did to earn the car at that price. The person keeps $8,000 in their pocket and now tells other co-workers and employees of their good fortune. Because of your knowledge you become the "go-to" person for advice on car purchasing, including other topics. This power now makes you viewed as the person in charge or "more" knowledgeable, even if you have not demonstrated this familiarity previously in that particular field.*

Remember to educate for growth and not educate to correct. If education is proactive, more is accomplished, more buy-in is achieved, and fewer mistakes are made. **If the coaching becomes strictly reactive, then your role of a leader gets changed into the role of a manager**. Managers simply fix problems and achieve results; leaders take the time to create concepts and designs, which could mean having to work less and can remain focused on what matters most. Not the busy daily work they must do due to being disengaged and having poorly trained employees.

Being a leader entails being a distinguished teacher, as people often look at those leading for answers. Building a system where your employees are empowered to feel superior towards others because of their expertise, not only enables you to elevate the level of production but to also have less on your plate as more of your employees share your perspective and are able to do what is needed to move your business forward.

8. The Driver of Change:

Change is common in major corporations and is often inevitable. In addition, it is the basis to forming a major disconnection between employees and employers. People simply do not like change and definitely do not like being taken out of their comfort zone, especially for someone else's benefit. As a manager, you are the lead in changing management, and therefore, there are many elements that you want to take into consideration.

Setting the mood: If you are familiar with the company you work for and know that change is frequent, then start preparing your staff for it early on. Regardless of what change is expected to come, you will be able to have more open minds, therefore, not taking people out of their comfort zone as much. Preparing your staff with constant motivational messages around the impact that good change has on an organization, sets the mood that change is a positive and will draw people's curiosity as to what changes the company will overtake. Understanding people's concerns prior to change even after it has been brought up, it is important as it will be useful to have everyone's reaction, either negative or positive.

- *HINT: At this point, people will start talking amongst themselves and it is important to understand negative vs. positive people. Someone who may have had a terrible experience in the past may try to toxic others going forward during a time of change. Understanding and recognizing threats before they occur is a vital role of your leadership position.*

Preparation for change: Once you know change is coming, it is time to prepare your team for the actual change. Preparation can be easy or extremely difficult based on the groundwork you set for yourself previously. If you are well organized, then the team will be receptive and welcoming towards the change, and this step will be more informational than anything else. If you did an average or poor job of organizing, it is a valuable time to start by understanding people's comfort levels with this change. As an example, holding a meeting and having everyone discuss one big life-changing event that occurred to them, would give you the ability to understand that person's acceptance of change. Make sure to share two to three positive stories you personally have gone through. Once you recognize who is open and understands adjustments as a positive impact, place them in charge of educating the group on the future adjustments. You can make each one of those individuals an advocate and assign different areas for each to study and deliver to the group at the next meeting. These advocates will be your damage control team, as others will feed off their enthusiasm and be more accepting of the changes forthcoming. Equip them with resources and the tools. Check in often to ensure that the message they will spread is accurate and not fictional or assumed. Correct deliverance is the key, as you only get one real shot at making sure an employee's experience is smooth. Making sure everyone comprehends their own roles, how they will be impacted, as well as how their change will impact is very critical.

- *HINT: Allowing people to know that through change, mistakes do happen and that patience on everyone's part is critical. There will be more work, more headaches, and only true teamwork and cooperation will make the process smooth for all. It is important that people feel like the team is stronger than ever going forward into change together. In addition, you and others are there to support them. Throwing in a reward every now and then will gain even more positive feedback and motivation.*

Attitude is everything: During change, many individuals will look to those in power to understand how they feel about change and will follow the lead. In other words, if you do not like the adjustments yourself and seem negative about it, then it is very likely that those pursuing you will mimic your behavior. Keeping a positive outlook on the change and demonstrating this outlook will enhance your chances of leading the change without resistance. Making sure that the advocates you put in place demonstrate the positive attitude and excitement will re-enforce your position.

Through the change: Once the change is underway, make sure that your employees are comfortable and remain focused if things do not go as planned. Having the appropriate channels to go through and understanding how they can troubleshoot issues will bring people at ease. In other words, knowing who to call for help or who to ask for help makes it easier and less impactful on your part. Check in often with your staff, even if they do not follow up with you. Follow up with your advocates to know the issues and complaints they hear about and address them quickly. Reinforce that everyone is doing a great job even if they are having difficulties. Change is always difficult as it is new; therefore, everyone to a degree needs to rediscover their roles. Be understanding of mistakes and coach all the time without using authority, but rather teach people to not make the same mistakes twice.

After the change: Talking about the experience or the change after it is all said and done is very important, as it creates unity within the employees and most importantly within the business. Aim to find more common ground on an experience they undertook together. There will also be much more to learn from one another's perspectives to learn from in the future. Being able to communicate what people would have done differently and still address any lasting concerns that maybe were not addressed before will get you a more prosperous environment.

Remember that change is constant in every corporation, and that you need to be the glue no matter how big or small the change. Good managers will take in adjustments, manage it and take employees through it so that the company's impact is minimal. Great leaders will take their employees through the adjustments, minimize the corporate impact, and ensure the connection that their employees have is not damaged. In addition, take ownership of the experience that employees and customers undertake. If you do not prepare well for change, then you lose the ownership piece around the employees' loyalty to their company or yourself.

9. The Upside Down Pyramid Theory:

I would advise my employees to analyze their business in a different way—to think of it as a Pyramid. That is correct, a pyramid with you being at the top of it overlooking your empire. Your mid-level staff would follow, and finally your front-line workers would be at the bottom holding everyone else above. The idea of you overlooking everyone else and keeping an eye on the horizon will enable you to gauge the road ahead and make business growth decisions, as you should. The real problem, however, is that the higher you go in your organization (empire), the more you lose sight of the people at the bottom and the more layers you create in between them and you.

Many would argue that this is why you put people in charge, but do you really expect their dedication, pride and love for the company to be like yours? Can you also guarantee that their intentions are your well-being, no matter if that means they must give up their money and jobs for the sake of the company? Many would agree that no one has pride in their work like those that have sweat to build what they have become.

- **Create stability; stand on a platform, not a peak!** Being at the edge of a peak not only gives you an overall view, it does not allow you to move or act on your necessity other than to communicate down to others the instructions you want them to follow. Wouldn't it make more sense to stand on a flat platform and move freely on it?

- **It is easier to go down a hill than a set of stairs.** When your pyramid is reversed, it is much easier and faster to reach the peak, as you do not have to climb all those levels and foundations to go back to the top. Instead, you are downhill ready to change the course in minutes, yet are still strong on your platform, listening and delivering on what matters most.

- **Keep your employees alert of doing their best as you are.** Is it not true that when you are told that your boss is arriving, you are most likely going to try and impress them by working your best? Is it not true that when your boss's boss is going to be arriving, everyone is stressing to make sure you all know what you are doing and look good doing it? If you answered yes to these questions then ask yourself, how would ALL your employees and managers feel if you actually were known to drop in at anytime? Wouldn't they be more productive?

- **Lead by example with your front line.** By being present on the front line, you can watch and coach all your employees on how to bring the brand to life. As well as, how to make sure everyone else that works there knows how to do the same even when they are confused, all they have to do is watch you.

- **Listen to those that represent your brand**. Your front line employees might love or hate their job, some of their issues might be very easily fixable, yet simply never brought to your attention. In the meantime, others in your management do not want to nag or do their job, which is to communicate their problems upwards. This is when you see and hear the issues on hand and can simply change the employee's performance by giving them what they want. The power to listen is now directly back in your hands as it once was when you were cultivating your company.

- **Hear it from your customers**. Your customers represent your profits, and therefore their voices count and should be heard. No one is better equipped to act on a customer's complaints and comments than you. More importantly, when customers complain, there might be a broken process that needs to acquire fixture, though not necessarily a people problem. Since you understand your business the best, you have a front row seat in fixing the broken process.

By reversing your pyramid, you get up close and personal with the most important aspects of your business, your customers and your employees, but more importantly, it gives you access to their interactions. Those interactions are your profits that are either growing or being thrown away. Being there allows you to observe, correct, and understand all aspects of your business. By standing on a concrete platform, one that is not bound to one peak location but rather on an entire platform to walk on, allows you to multitask faster and better than before. Donald Trump even wrote a book on management discussing the benefits of being closer to those that manage and work in his front line

All leaders in Corporate America should be able to come down and drop the whole "too proud" attitude and focus on what matters, this being the employees and customers who are the reason you are at your climax, as without them there would not be a business and there would not be a pyramid. Instead, it would only be YOU standing on a meaningless peak by yourself, with no foundation and no one to catch you when you fall.

10. Multi-Level Action Planning and Alignment:

In any business, action planning is very much necessary. It is important that you have a plan and those that work for you have a plan on how to increase profitability, service, and sales. Creating a plan is one thing but ensuring that everyone else's plans are aligned is another. When creating your business strategy, simply follow these guidelines:

Realistic: Making realistic strategies with realistic goals is key. Make sure to understand what you are asking people to do and if it is possible once knowing the skill set and manpower you have at hand.

Systematic: Will the plan you set really drive you to the desired outcome? If it is known that a set goal is usually met to about 80 percent by your people with the correct push, set your goals about 120 percent of target, to land right about 100 percent in reaching your goals. Do not set goals too high, or they will be perceived as impossible and outcomes will not matter.

Plans that align: Take into consideration the plans of those above you and be very well aligned to cause the same outcomes through different behaviors and activities. If you create tactics that have no direct correlation to corporate priorities, you are simply not aligned to what your organization wants you to do, and therefore, you create a problem for yourself.

Accountability: Create plans you hold yourself and your teams accountable to. Plans you generate should not be negotiable and should be enforced on a day-to-day basis. Accountability is where real leaders differentiate themselves from others. Structuring business results is our responsibility and creating results through people should be a priority.

As a great leader you must be able to understand where you are leading your team. You must understand and be able to demonstrate to others the road you envision to take to get there. The path you choose and your ability to clearly show people of the results will earn you the right to continue leading your team into the future.

11. The Communicator/Motivator:

As we discussed earlier, there is usually a significant disconnection between Corporate America and its employees as people usually lead through their corporation and not their own skill sets. In other words, they become the corporation and simply do what they are told without question or input. The problem is they lose loyalty that way as they are no longer perceived as a leader but rather those that just obtain commands.

In one way or another, we all obtain comments in the service industry, whether it is from a client or from someone above us; we all take directive from some direction. The real challenge however, lies within the communication of these orders down the ladder. As employees hear that communication is coming down the ladder, they will be expecting it from you. It is very important to set the tone down with how you want your employees to take on this new directive, rather than just repeating what you were told.

- *Example: The new directive has informed everyone that focusing on new customers needs to happen via exceptional customer service. Your first option is to just repeat what you heard and answer any questions. The problem with this option is that it is not your idea, and therefore, very difficult to communicate without sounding like you are repeating something you have heard elsewhere. Option two changes the tone. You can take a moment and explain the new directive, but then add for example, "here is the news, but here is what we will do about it…" Being able to differentiate yourself from "the Corporation" standpoint, from your own to your employees is very important, as it will earn you loyalty points. The employees usually assume you are on the Corporation side, therefore, when you come up with a way to be perceived as part of your own people (see "pyramid" example above), you win their loyalty.*

How do you win their trust?

Your words are your strongest weapon, followed by your confidence and your delivery of a speech. Years ago, Harvard's MBA program consisted heavily of math, economics, and business courses, which enabled graduates to earn great jobs in very little time. As these graduates quickly made their way to the top, they realized that the road ahead was more about their verbal and people skill sets, rather than using the technical principals they learned in school. Many graduates were failing in this department as very little was done for them in terms of speaking and writing. This news made its way to the school's Dean's office fairly fast, and they decided to make their MBA program consist 80 percent of English, speech, and other language based on the previous issues. The real matter here is that unless you know how to talk, you lose buy-in and interest.

Here are some basic tips on making sure your point is heard and be considered a great speaker. Motivating your team and communicating properly is an important core for a leader. Make sure that you are direct, straight to the point, and knowledgeable about the topic you want to share with your team.

1. **Be ready**: Know the conversations you want to have, practice them, and deliver. Make sure to know the facts in all your interaction topics you have to speak about.

2. **Differentiate the company and yourself**. Bring to people's attention through your words that you are their team leader, not a "corporate puppy."

3. **Set examples:** During speeches or speaking engagements, make sure to demonstrate your level of experience through stories that are real and have occurred in the past.

4. **Be political:** Speaking to your employees may include not disclosing private company information that employees should not know, but it helps to not lie about it. Acting secretive and withholding information will usually get you out-casted as a leader; people clearly see your loyalty hanging elsewhere. Being tactful and letting people know that confidential information cannot be shared is both honorable and does not impact people's outlook of you. Motivating can be done through words, but it must also be based on what others interests are. Keep in mind that not everyone is motivated by the same thing.

- *Hint: Try to hire people with similar mindsets and long-term goals. That way the motivation you provide is consistent and people's ambitions are aligned with your actions.*

Remember this: there are 3 main forms of motivation.

Monetary: Most people enjoy a cash reward and find it to be fair compensation if asked to do extra work or for their accomplishments. Money is usually a main attraction and a major reason everyone is at work. This could be in means of offering overtime, raises, or even staff appreciation rewards. This makes for a great level of motivation, especially as people are struggling with money in this economic climate.

Growth: My personal favorite. Growth is what drives many people. Everyone wants to be in a better place or position to earn more money. Many also want personal growth, meaning simply learning more about the industry they work which provides motivation. In many ways, job enrichment can be achieved with growth.

Recognition: As simple as it may sound, some people want no more than a "thank you" or getting recognized for their achievements. Many are proud of the work they do yet do not feel like they should just be appreciated for doing their job correctly, but appreciated when it is noticeable. Simple words can go very far for some and be considered nice to others even if this is not their main form of motivation. If others are motivated by money or growth, if recognition is lacking, then the other two factors may not provide complete satisfaction and motivation.

Communicating properly and being able to motivate your team will take you very far in business productivity, as motivated people work much harder than those that detest what they do. Motivation is also heavily based on people enjoying their business environment and the colleagues they work with. If they enjoy working with one another, they help each other. Hiring the correct team members that will drive the same level of engagement towards business, will usually share similar traits and goals that will help you achieve much more.

12. Manage Through Influence, Not Authority:

With power often comes fear, which is warranted. As you hold in your hands the power to hire or terminate employees, in most instances, you also control their income sources.

Should people be fearful of you?

I believe employees should be fearful of you to a certain degree, but not to a point where you are a threat, but rather to show your level of superiority over them. Fear never brings positive results. It triggers everything down as people fear communicating with you, informing you of any mistakes, and more importantly, the fear that they will gain a bad reputation with you, therefore, choosing to stay silent during any issues or concerns. As we discussed earlier, open communication, the human touch and the relationship of a mentor/mentee all have a significant impact on your leadership and your business.

- *Fear should not be dominant in your leadership style or used to leverage results; instead people should fear the consequences to their own actions and not YOU*.

If they have a clear understanding of how you work and what is expected of them, then they will know when to be afraid of their lack of action. Screaming, getting upset, raising your voice, banging on objects, or demonstrating your authority simply makes you look out of control. Remember to not threaten people's jobs. Great leadership does not bark, it bites and so if you are a constant barker, then your bark loses value and people think you never bite!

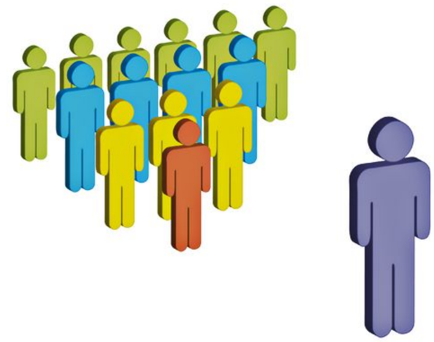
Bite when necessary without barking first. People already know when they are not performing or doing their job correctly and are expecting to lose their jobs. Threatening them is additional unneeded pressure that keeps them from being able to correct their behavior.

When an employee expects to get terminated for poor performance, yet instead is coached and ends up becoming a high performer, they grow a bond to the people that helped them when they were in need. Therefore, they grow loyalty to those that believed in them instead of kicking them while they were down.

Coaching people through influence helps them see that you truly care and are taking time to educate and motivate them to grow. Everyone knows that managing through authority is available to those in power, and that it is much easier to command than to educate. Holding the power to use authority and choosing not to, gives you even more buy-in during hard times.

Remember to manage through influence until it no longer works and more demonstration of authority is required.

13. Bringing it All Together Through Loyalty:



Now that you have all these wonderful qualities and techniques, what do you do with all of it? All of these different leadership traits interconnect as they all accomplish the same thing. They all create loyalty from those that follow you. Loyalty is the ultimate form of recognition for a leader as this drives people to follow their leaders through any situation as they have full confidence in your ability to lead the way to a better tomorrow for them.

Many people take this for granted in businesses, as they do not value the power of the bond employees form for them. When you think of loyalty, think of unconditional commitment and engagement. There is no need to motivate employees who are loyal every day; they simply want to be there and follow you. They will not question what you ask of them, as they know you have their best interest at heart and understand that even if sometimes they do not understand why you do certain things, you are doing what is best for them. This connection is the fundamental of **Human Sigma**, which in business measures the engagement of a person at work.

Engaged employees means higher customer service and higher sales. It also means more productivity for the time employees spend working. Most people do real work for about 30 percent to 60 percent of the time they spend at work. The key to great leadership is to find a way to move that productivity up to above 80 percent. Most companies that succeed do not succeed because they hire more people, or pay more, or simply expect more out of people. Everyone has the ability to expect further and hire additional help, if needed. Yet it is those companies that hire leadership that is able to retrieve 80 percent or more from their workgroups that truly succeed. Loyalty is the core component of Human Sigma and is ultimately why we all work so hard every day.

14. The Life Changer:

Loyalty is earned through your actions as leaders, but there is much more impact on someone's life than just becoming a better employee. As a leader you have to realize that what you teach others will be applied to their day-to-day lives, regardless of their circumstance. If you are truly effective in your role, you will be able to mold someone's perspective and thinking, rather than just change a few of their behaviors at work.

Remember that there are many people out there whose lives will be improved because of your commitment to them, and therefore, will enable them to succeed in ways they had never thought possible, all once again because of <u>your</u> help. Understanding the level of power you hold over someone's thinking and someone's perspective is a major responsibility. One that cannot just be treated like an action item but instead must be constantly improved to ensure it can continue to spread amongst others as well. Great leadership is rewarding as you get to see people transform and grow, and most of that was made possible because of your efforts. They will now be able to pass that knowledge on, and therefore, spread your word.

15. The Pursuit of Perfection:

Now that you have understood all the steps to becoming a great leader, keep in mind that practice makes perfect and that fear will always exist in all of us, regardless of how confident or strong we are.

Those that can control their fear, ultimately control their outcome. As we have been through many times, we drive our lives to any destination we desire and never allow our environment to control us.

A friend of mine once said:

"The destination you choose, or the distance you travel is irrelevant; as long as you know where you are headed, and as for the time it takes to get there…well, that's in your hands."

So what is next?

16. What is Perfection?

We all can agree that no one is perfect, but we cannot say that trying to be perfect is not possible. Perfection is different to all and holds different values for each individual but should remain our ultimate strive. If you look back at your past 5-10 years and ask yourself “how much have I moved towards perfection?”, you will truly realize what your net worth in society has been. I want to take a moment to discuss what perfection is to me. I believe that perfection is what is generally accepted by society as a 10/10 person in just about all they do. Perfection exists in all of us, and through the years we learn to bring it out for others to witness. We become experts in our fields and become perfectionists at what we do, yet we often forget to be best at living life. Life is about the experiences we encounter, the lessons we learn, the people we meet, and the circumstances and opportunities we create for ourselves. The one who masters how to experience life has a perfect life as they no longer feel without purpose.

Being able to help others grow is significant and a great display of leadership but the final fundamental trait that a good leader has, is to never stop growing no matter how far you have gotten. This ability to recognize your own value makes you more powerful as you know yourself better than others and ultimately allows you to grow further by being in the constant pursuit of becoming the perfect leader.

Till next time,
- Secret Entourage

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BONUS READ: 5 Steps To Making It In Corporate America

There are many times where we talk of Corporate America and its downfalls, but the reality is that it's not that all that bad in some cases. Being part of a larger firm or working for someone can have its benefits as well as it downfalls, but more importantly can work much better for you if you know what to expect.

We will take you through some of the main downfalls to watch out for so that you are not caught by surprise once they happen and so that you are proactively able to navigate your way through them.

1. **Be a Change Agent**: Corporate America often consists of what we call "puppies," which are managers that simply follow orders and do not offer suggestion or express their opinion. Expecting those managers to change their minds is very unlikely, and therefore, expect them to follow whatever they are told. They will often be told to do something and at other times something completely different, which immediately changes the direction regardless of what is good for their team or their business unit. Expect change when possible and do not go against it, instead find a way to adapt quickly and efficiently. You will then be noticed as others dissipate their time nagging on something that will not change.

2. **Expect Others to Want to Cover Themselves:** In large companies, mistakes are made from the upper level. There are many managers who will keep looking down at their employees for making those mistakes and blaming them for doing something they were never instructed to do. In order to protect themselves, executives and senior managers will look for everything they can to blame others for something they could have stopped proactively. At which point, they find a way to get you to take the blame. Protecting yourself is tricky, so my best advice is if you need to ask your supervisor regarding "the right thing to do," then email them and await their response via email. If you get it, then keep the email as proof and proceed. Most likely you will not get a response, but when you follow up again via email, you might get a phone call that will leave no trace for anyone to track and you end up with no backup resource.

3. **Black and White Only:** We are not referring to your skin tone, but rather your thinking. Corporate America usually will have you follow a Code of Conduct or Code of Ethics, which is the black and white version of the employees protection, but can be interpreted sometimes

with shades of gray. In the case of being an entrepreneur, shades of gray works in your favor, but in Corporate America it is the exact opposite. Remember that your boss did not get to where he is by being creative and redesigning the system, instead he followed it. Rules are rules and stick to them as you will quickly find your way out the door if you are too slick or find ways to beat others by playing the system in place.

4. **Don't Take Anything Personally**: You will meet plenty of people, all characters with their own personalities and backgrounds. Be careful to never mix your personal feelings with those at work. No matter how bad the situation gets, keep your cool and be extremely cautious to not take anything personally. Do not allow others who are unprofessional to harm you, but rather harm themselves. They will eventually meet their match and find themselves out the door. You also need to make sure that at no point could you be associated with them, as you might be labeled as the "black sheep."

5. **It Is Not Who You Know, But Who Knows You:** We often make the mistake of trying to know and meet all the key players of an organization, and often end up looking like we are trying to impress them. Instead I suggest a different approach, allow your work to be the reason you are known and make sure the right people are paying attention to it. Instead of trying to be everyone's friend, become the guy they depend on and know about, the guy that gets things done and delivers on his word. Others will always be worried about whom they knew but you should worry about who knows you.

Following these 5 steps will help you avoid conflict and help you in situating yourself in a favorable role within your organization. Getting promoted is easier than you think, but getting terminated is twice as easy. So please be careful and move with caution as you make your way to the top. As entrepreneurs, dreamers and fast movers, it is imperative that no matter what role you take in Corporate America, you never lose sight of what your dreams are and what your real goals are outside of your 9-5 job. More importantly use the opportunities you were given in the organization to fuel your real passion.

