

Leading Others

*A session from
the Rx CD System*

Rx

Leading Others:

The ability to organize and motivate people to get things accomplished in a way that everyone feels a sense of order and direction.

Why is this skill important?

Effective leadership depends on a fine mixture of capacities that must match the environment in which the manager is asked to perform. However, regardless of that mixture, every leader must be able to gain the trust of others and be able to solve problems among and for the group.

A person who has good skills in Leading Others will effectively combine such capacities as empathetic ability, problem solving ability, self-esteem, role confidence, and motivating others into a cohesive approach to guiding others toward a mutual goal.

In contrast, someone who has not developed his or her skills in Leading Others is most likely unable to solve problems effectively and cannot be empathetic toward others. Someone with poorly developed Leading Others abilities most likely has the following difficulties:

- Personnel don't understand what is expected of them.
- Personnel don't understand corporate goals or mandates.
- Plans are not developed in collaboration with employees or team members.
- Communication is not effective.
- Employees or team members are unable to work together effectively to achieve a goal.

To be a courageous and effective leader requires that you have a sense of conviction about those things you believe strongly in and that you act accordingly. If you know what is most important to you and to your organization, you can feel firm in your convictions about those things. Leading sometimes requires making choices or decisions that are unpopular with other people, but that serve the good of your company or organization. Leaders must be able to make decisions that involve risk and be willing to take a stand in the face of adversity.

As you work with employees or project team members, you will find that they face difficult decisions and problematic issues as often as you do. You will not need to solve the problems for these people, but encourage them to decide for themselves how to resolve the difficulty.

It is critical that you have an "open door" policy when it comes to problem-solving—you need to be accessible and non-judgmental when people bring problems or concerns to your attention. Your approach upon discovering a problem should not be to place blame but to address the problem as quickly and effectively as possible. Once the problem is resolved, you should evaluate the actions you took in retrospect.

What are skills associated with Leading Others?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Leading Others:

- Inspires others to peak performance.
- Is a person others would follow even if they didn't have to.
- Sets an appropriate example for others to emulate and follow.
- Instills a sense of order, direction, and focus.
- Modifies style to match the demands of the situation.
- Communicates a vision and a belief in its value.
- Responds to adversity without faltering.
- Clearly communicates the "why" behind every "how".

How do you develop your own skills in Leading Others?

- Make sure that your employees or team members understand long-term and short-term corporate and departmental strategic plans.
- Lead your team based on the foundation of your values and beliefs, and the foundation of corporate mission statements and goals.
- Share information with staff and peers—don't hide news, feedback, critiques, or praise.
- Communicate frequently both formally (staff meetings, memos, etc.) and informally (casual conversation, one-on-one meetings, etc.) with your staff and/or team members.
- Support people when they make difficult choices and be prepared to deal with other people's reactions.
- Choose your battles wisely. Determine which issues directly affect your mission or goals or involve your core values.
- Ask company leadership, your peers, and your employees what battles they think are important and work to support their ideals.
- Focus not only on making a stand, but also on how you may accommodate your requirements while still resolving the problem satisfactorily for all involved.
- Be decisive. Indecisiveness gives the impression that you can't make tough choices or stand firm on difficult issues.
- Encourage others to take initiative. Reward them for making independent decisions.

- Give appropriate guidance to each person—coach them according to level of experience and knowledge.
- Don't make other people's decisions for them. Lend your expertise if necessary or if you are asked to, but always stop short of making decisions for someone else.
- If someone comes to you with a specific problem, hear him out then let him know what you plan to do about the problem.
- Set a specific goal or goals for the problem. Make deadlines by which you hope to accomplish problem definition, problem solving, and final resolution.
- If you discover a problem that may affect other people or your department or company as a whole, take steps to alert the proper people without causing undue alarm.
- Be persistent. If the same problem keeps recurring, do your best to uncover the root cause of the problem. You may not have delved deep enough or investigated enough possibilities. Persistence in problem solving gives others the impression that you want issues resolved quickly and completely so they won't recur.
- Don't procrastinate. If you are prone to procrastinating, break your task up into little parts and set deadlines for yourself to accomplish these more manageable tasks.
- Build teams and project groups to work on projects or address problems. Empower those groups to accomplish what is required, and be supportive of them as they work toward mutually agreed-upon goals.
- Encourage suggestions from your staff or team members, and recognize their value publicly.
- Have a personal development plan that you are pursuing at all times. Encourage your staff and/or team members to follow your example by making time and funding for development available.

Leading Others Activities

Activity 1: Bringing Value to a Team

Think about a project team you are currently involved with. List each team member's name and establish what that person brings to the group, thinking about how their skills contribute to the tasks they have been assigned and/or accepted. Include yourself in the list.

Name	Skills/Expertise	Assigned Tasks

When you have completed the table above, reflect on how each team member’s particular expertise contributes to the success of the group as a whole. Make a conscious effort to support each person’s decisions and assist them with your areas of expertise when appropriate.

Activity 2: Choosing Battles Wisely

The following activities will help you determine what "battles" to fight in your professional life. Of course, each situation brings its own new set of decisions, challenges, and successes. However, if you set informed, realistic goals for yourself and your project team, you will be better prepared in the long run.

1. Think about your core values—the things that are most important to you. Make a list of 5-10 things that you value most and are worth standing up for:
2. What values do you have that you will never compromise?
3. What are three current issues needing your attention at work?
4. For each of the issues you described in #3 above, ask yourself what will happen if you don’t resolve the issue. Will it affect your core values? Will it negatively affect your group or organization in meeting its goals? Will it affect future events?

5. Have conversations with three people at work on what they believe critical issues are for you and your department or group. It's a good idea to ask one peer, one manager, and one employee, if possible.
6. Brainstorm with your group about what potential problems could occur in reaching these critical goals are. What would you do if the worst case happened?

Activity 3: Vision and Motivation

Think carefully about your department's mission within your company or organization, and answer the following questions to help you define your vision for what your department "stands for."

1. What is your company's mission statement?
2. What are the key organizational priorities right now?
3. What 3-5 services does your department or work group provide that no other group provides?
4. What are five unique skills or strengths that your department or work group's personnel offer to the company?
5. What do you think would make your group as successful as it can possibly be?
6. What do you think would make you most proud of accomplishing in the workplace?
7. What are three great ideas that individuals in your group have come up with that you haven't been able to act on?

Make sure that you share your responses with your department or work group. If they are open to it, make time to discuss their responses to the same questions and work together to "vision" for your department.

Activity 4: Personnel Development

1. Make a list that includes the names of each of your staff or team members.
2. What is each person's key strength, in your opinion?
3. What is each person's key weakness, in your opinion?
4. How can you encourage each person's strengths? Think about upcoming projects you could assign them to, ask them for advice on difficult issues, or assign them to an "extra" project that will take advantage of their skills and add value
5. How can you help each person improve on his or her weaknesses? Assign them to an "extra" project that will help them improve/develop their skills and add value, seek out training opportunities that will help them advance, ask them for their own feedback on areas in which they need improvement
6. Act on your own recommendations—set a meeting date with each person to discuss your ideas and solicit their opinions and commitment.

Name	Strengths	How to Encourage Strengths	Weaknesses	How to Improve	Meeting Date