

PART 1

LEARNING TO LEAD

Understanding leadership
and developing your leadership style

The Skills You Need Guide to
Leadership

SKILLS YOU NEED
Helping You Develop Life Skills

**The Skills You Need
Guide to Leadership**

LEARNING TO LEAD: UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPING YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE

Skills You Need

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**“SOME ARE BORN GREAT, SOME ACHIEVE GREATNESS
AND SOME HAVE GREATNESS THRUST UPON THEM.”**

William Shakespeare, Twelfth Night

Just as greatness, so the same could be said of leadership. There are many people who do not seek leadership positions but find that they are called upon to step up and display leadership, either occasionally or on an ongoing basis.

This eBook is designed particularly for new leaders, or those who are preparing for leadership, whether on a temporary or more permanent basis. However, established leaders should also find interesting ideas here.

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What is a Leader?

A TRADITIONAL VIEW OF LEADERSHIP

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a leader as:

**“THE PERSON WHO LEADS OR
COMMANDS A GROUP, ORGANIZATION,
OR COUNTRY: THE LEADER OF A PROTEST
GROUP, A NATURAL LEADER”**

There is, in many senses, a degree of formality about the term ‘leader’. A whole organisation accepts one person as its ‘leader’ and, by virtue of that badge of rank, the leader has formal authority and power. This can lead new leaders to infer that they need to be able to do everything, and do it right every time.

However, taken to extremes, there are some very real dangers in this view. For example, if an organisation has only one leader, that person can come to be seen as the source of all ideas and the maker of all decisions. The rest of the organisation must, therefore, be followers, who take no initiative and make no decisions. These people are also free of responsibility for the outcomes of their actions.

This presents a big problem for the organisation as a whole and followers as individuals:

- There is no synergy, in that the whole never becomes greater than the sum of its parts, because its parts do not work together;
- People do not take the initiative;
- There is little incentive for anyone to do anything “good” except follow orders; and
- There is little reason for people to not do “bad” things so long as they are within the letter of the law.

This is not going to make for a pleasant workplace, or an inspiring one.

It is also an issue for the leader

As the only one leading, he or she may not be less than perfect at any time, and not just right every time, but seen to be right every time. This is an impossible state to achieve: we are human and therefore fallible. To err is human, as the saying goes.

What’s more, the longer such a formal leader is in post, the greater the gap becomes between the leader and their followers. What can happen is that the leader becomes less tolerant of independent thought, and the followers become less capable of it. At this point, if it is to survive ‘After the Leader’, an organisation has to look seriously at succession planning. In such an organisation, succession planning must be the responsibility of the leader, otherwise it is likely to be interpreted as mutiny.

That, in itself, is likely to be a problem, as the leader will often look for someone who will ‘carry on their legacy’, rather than someone to take the organisation forward in a new direction, responding to current issues and needs.

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