

How to Lead When You're Not in Charge

The Lie: You have to be in charge to lead. If leadership is "influence," then we all have influence and can lead where we are. Simply put, influencers influence, so you want to be influencing well wherever you are.

(Note for the Point Leader: As a leader, you want yourself surrounded by influencers. If you push decision-making down the organizational chart, then you want people to know how to lead when you're not in charge).

1. Lead Yourself. We tend to think "they" (the top leader) need to lead me well. No. You need to lead yourself well.

Learn to be a *great* follower! There are four kinds of followers:

- ① "Yes" Followers - those who say "yes" to everything the top leader says or wants
- ② Pragmatic Followers - those who do only what they perceive benefits them
- ③ Alienated Followers - those who put all of their energy into doing their own thing and who are passive and/or critical of the top leaders
- ④ Star Followers - those who want to help the top leadership achieve what they want to achieve for the whole organization

It goes without saying that Star Followers (those who lead themselves well):

- Are the easiest to lead (note: they are not easiest because they are the least opinionated, but because they help the whole organization).
- Therefore, they are the one's everyone desires to have under them.
- And are the most likely to be "moved up" to higher levels of leadership.

So, if you lead yourself well, you will be given more influence by the leaders above you!

2. Chose Positivity. The greatest thing you can bring to the team is positive energy and a positive attitude.

(Note: This is especially true for the top leader; the greatest thing I can give to my staff is my energy. This is most important when things aren't going well. The point leader has the ability to lift the whole team: "There is hope!" This is also why you should only hire people with high energy).

Positivity is a fight for "we," not "me"! As we all know, the natural human pull is toward "me."

"When you have weigh in you have buy in!"... this is true... but for followers they also need to learn to be positive even if they can't weigh in on a decision (for example, if the decision is made by the highest board, one that not all staff are on). A critical spirit is not helpful for the top leaders or the organization.

You can make it work or not work. You have the power to sabotage any decision made by the top leadership (with the words we speak to other, the look in our eyes, the facial expressions we give people... expressions like disgust). You can make it a poor decision or a great decision based upon how you execute it!

So, when you get handed a decision, you have to ask yourself, "Am I going to fight for 'me'... or 'we'?" It is so easy to be the critic; to find what is wrong with every decision. Our ideas are always the best ideas (or so we think). In an organization, the critic is not helpful. Office cooler chatter or the "meeting after the meeting," even if you are right, is not helpful.

So, more important than the organization making the right decision is the ability for you to own the decision and to make the decision right!

The truth is that your positivity will spread to those around you! So, be positive.

You have choice in your attitude when you are not making the decisions. You can be frustrated for not being

happy” to “making this organization better.”

(Note for the Point Leader: Give your best people the best opportunities. And your best people are those making the most of the opportunities they are given).

One final way to reject passivity is to remember that:

Empowerment starts with me. (“My boss doesn’t empower me.” Empower your boss. Take initiative. Be part of the solution. Be positive. That allows the boss to look further down the road).

If you are saying, “One day when I’m in charge....”, then you will never be in charge. Because you are not working to improve yourself.

Final Thought. The influence you cultivate now is the kind of influence you will use when you become the point leader. How you sub-lead now will become the habit of how you lead in the future.