

Session 2.6 | Finding the Right Tools for Developing Your Leadership Skills

In Module 1, we were reminded that all leaders need help. Then we looked at what makes a leader worth following and the 3 essential attributes of The Leader Worth Following.

Module 2 is all about Finding the Right Tools for Developing Your Leadership Skills.

One of the most frequent questions that we are asked is, “How can you sort through the diverse content and information in the marketplace to identify the best tools and the best resources to develop skills, attitudes, and practices that will stick?”

There are several reasons that we struggle with this. In fact, take just a moment to think about the questions for yourself. How can we sort through the diverse content and information that’s in the marketplace, and how can we identify the best tools and resources for developing skills, attitudes, and practices that stick?

It is challenging because:

1. There really is a lot of information available.
2. It is hard to decide what is best. It is difficult to look at all the material that is available and identify for yourself what would be best for us at this moment, in this season of our work.
3. We get bogged down trying to make the best possible decision. We want to get it right for obvious reasons.
4. We’re worried about what our boss, colleagues, or team or other people are going to think.

As we think about The Right Tools for Developing Your Leadership Skills, I want to share with you 4 things that are involved in this process...

1. Starts with a mindshift.
 - a) From how you've been doing it, to how you should be doing it.
 - b) From what's not been working, to what will work.
 - c) From how most people attempt it, to how you will do it with BETTER results.
 - d) Different Results Require Different Actions.
 - e) Better Results Requires Better Thinking.

So, if you’re going to find the right tools, it will start with a mindshift. It has to start with a mindshift.

2. Require the application of 3 principles:
 - a) The Simple Effect
 - b) The Consistency Effect
 - c) Simple People Development

We're going to look more at these tools in depth later, but I want you to be aware of them now.

The simple effect, the consistency effect, and simple people development.

In fact, this is a great time to remind you, if you haven't already to download the Worksheet on this page so that you can follow along and complete the worksheet for this session.

So, finding the right tools, first of all, starts with a mindshift. Number two, requires the application of the three principles: the simple effect, the consistency effect, and simple people development.

3. Results in simplified thought processes, actions, and learning.

When you have the right tools, you no longer need to continually search for planning tools and materials. You'll have what you need. You can then turn your focus to learning opportunities that are related directly to your role, products and services, and organization.

Remember, we're going to look at all of these things in more depth later, so if you're questioning if this is even possible, or if it will even work the way that we're saying it we're going to come back to this more in depth later, but I want you to be aware of it now.

4. Require you to make a decision.

Let me tell you a story. A number of years ago my wife and I pulled into the parking lot of a fast food diner restaurant – it's the kind where you can order from the car. She was driving on this particular occasion and she pulled into a space. The menu board was on her side of the car so I waited "patiently" for her to get ready for what seemed like an eternity.

I was starving as I watched from the passenger seat as she was browsing through the menu board.

I have learned that it takes her a while to make these types of decisions - and that it's not helpful for me to try to rush the process for, so I pulled out my iPad and I fiddled with a couple of apps – attempting to get my mind off of this intense hunger that I have.

Finally, I gave in and said – "Do you know what you are going to order?"

She paused for a second and then she confessed to me – "I can't decide what I want", which was really no surprise to me. I'm used to it.

I was still scrolling through a news article, and so I offered without even looking up. I said, "If you just push that little red button there it will help you decide."

It's true – some people could sit in the drive-thru for 10 minutes and they're stuck trying to decide what they're in the mood for, but the moment the voice calls from the speaker they feel this intense pressure to make a decision.

To be honest, I regularly have days where I feel overwhelmed.

In fact, for the last two months we've made some significant decisions, one of which was to put together this Fast Track. Every single day I get up and I come to my work, I am faced with more work that I can possibly get done, our team members are faced with more work that we can possibly get done. So, we've learned to live by the little mantra that you'll hear us say over and over again, "We don't have to get it perfect; we just have to take the next step." We want you to get that, too.

When I feel overloaded, it's frustrating. Discouraging. In part because, I'm a leader myself and I teach this stuff on regular basis. I'm supposed to know how to handle it.

And when you're stuck – agonizing over decision – it's hard to decide what to do first – where to even start?

Most of the time it's that fear that keeps us stuck and keeps us from moving forward. Many people live stagnant lives never making the progress that they long to make, because they fear failure. In fact, it's the most common of all fears.

Again, we're afraid. We aren't aware of everything that is out there, because there really is a lot of information available.

We don't want to miss, we don't want to make the right decision. In fact, we're afraid to make the wrong decision and the training will be a waste again.

...of disappointing the boss, colleagues, or team

Here's what we've learned...

Your fears lose power when you confront them. So go ahead – face the fear. Make the decision.

Ask yourself, When it comes to choosing a path forward for my growth and as we work through ideas, concepts, and themes ask yourselves, "When it comes to choosing the path forward for my growth, for my team, or for my organization..."

- What do I fear that has me stalled today?
- Why am I having trouble getting back on track?
- What am I holding onto that's holding me back?
- What one step that I can take today?

Then take one step. Don't put it off. Don't plan to do it later. Do it today.

You see, movement motivates. It energizes. So get moving.

Sure, you may make a wrong decision every now and then – even in the drive-thru. Feeling pressured, you hastily make a decision and as you pull away from the drive-thru you wonder, Why did I order that? That’s not what I wanted! (In fact, I don’t want much of anything from a fast food drive-thru these days.)

I’ve made a lot of decisions that didn’t turn out the way that I had planned, yet I’ve still been successful!

You’ve made a lot of decisions that haven’t turned out the way that you planned, and yet you still made significant progress and certain areas of your life and work.

Why? For me it’s because I’ve made more decisions that worked than those that didn’t work.

The important thing is not that we get it perfect, it’s just that we take the next best step. The important thing is that we make a decision that we don’t remain stuck.

Instead of holding on to what’s holding you back, embrace the learning, embrace the opportunity with energy and passion.

So go ahead – push the button today. It will help you decide.

When you do begin to make those steps forward, you will find the right tools, you’ll find more clarity and more energy to keep moving toward momentum.

I just want to take a few minutes and show you tool that we teach more in depth in our full course, The Simple Leadership Compass, so I won’t spend as much time on it here but I want you to see it...

This is the Momentum Tool, when we teach this tool we start at the center of the tool with clarity and movement, and the best way to think about this tool, is based on an Ancient writing that said, “Scripture is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.” No matter what your style is and no matter how you feel about that, the principle is, before we had all the electricity and all of the lighting options that we have in the world today, people used to use a gas lantern, or a torch. As they would walk through the darkness down a dark path or through a dark part of the city, and as they will take a step, the light from that flame that was flickering in their lamp or that was flickering on the end of the torch gave them enough light to take the next step.

The question is, How did they get enough light to take the next step, and the answer is they had to take a step in order to get enough light, to take the next step. As they took a step, each time they took a step, they got enough light for the following step. The same is true for me and you.

When we’re faced with the decisions, many times we feel like we can’t move forward because we don’t have enough clarity or enough light. If you will, to take the next step. Many times we simply need to take a step. Again, remember you don’t have to get it perfect, you just need to take the next step.

Now, here's what interesting about that, as you take the next step you get enough light or enough clarity to take the next step, and you get more and more energized and embolden to take the following steps.

It's like me when I was a kid when I went to summer camp, when I would first walk out of my cabin, if you could remember these primitive cabins that we used to have at summer camps. But I would walk toward the shower house at night, I've had this flashlight and it have just enough light to take the next step in front of me. As I would begin taking steps, I began hearing in the woods all around me all of these night noises and all of these things that would scare the crowd of me. As I started taking steps my eyes became adjusted to the darkness and I could take steps faster and faster and faster with each step I would get faster and faster not tripping over the roots and the rocks that were in my path as I walk toward the bath house. The same is true for you and me, articism, and leadership. The more we make movement and the more we make light and clarity that we get to take the next step, the faster and faster that we can go. Eventually, the buy product is momentum. But how many times do we fail to move forward because we're waiting for enough light, we're waiting for enough clarity, never taking the next step and so we never get to momentum. Whether it's in our life, our relationships, our work, our organization with team members never getting to momentum. It all starts with taking a step which then gives us more light, more clarity so that we can speed up that process and get to momentum.

So, we'll look more at the momentum tool in the full course, the Simple Leadership Compass.

In this session, we began looking at Finding the Right Tools for leading from the middle more effectively.

Next Session

In the next session, we are going to talk about what to do to intentionally develop your leadership skills.

Remember, you don't have to get it perfect, you just need to take the next step.

I'll see you in the next session.

Fast Action Steps

1. What is your biggest challenge with choosing the Right Tools for time management, focus, and planning?
2. What do I fear that is keeping me from taking the next step with leadership development?
3. What is the next step you should take today?