

Session 1.3 | The Leader Worth Following - Part 1

In the last session, I introduced you to the Simple Leadership Compass tool and we've looked at the 4 Greatest Challenges Leaders Are Facing Today and how to deal with these challenges.

In this session, I am going to show you what it means to be a leader worth following, rather than someone that people just have to follow.

Take a moment right now and download the Worksheet for this session and follow along as we move through the session.

The logical question for us is, "What is a leader worth following? What does it mean to be someone that people want to follow?"

Everybody talks about leadership development, and most leaders know it is an important part of increasing your own capacity and the capacity of those that you lead. Our tool, The Leader Worth Following, describes in simplest form the 3 essential attributes of the leader Worth following.

There are so many attributes of good people, moral people, and healthy people. But why are these essential attributes for a leader? And what does it mean to develop these essential attributes of a leader? How do you do that?

Let's take a look at the tool. After working with leaders and teams for more than 20 years, we've found that there are 3 essential attributes for The Leader Worth Following.

1. Knowledge (Competency, Skills, Expertise, Education, Experience). This is something you are very good at. It's what you received your credentials for. It's what you went to college or university for. However, in the new world where knowledge is at your fingertips, information is free, knowledge is no longer enough. To lead in the new world, leaders need more than just expertise.
2. Connection (Relationship, Care, and Support) has become an essential attribute for leaders - the ability and capacity to be fully present with people in differing situations. To connect both with the head and the heart of those you lead.
3. Awareness (Self-awareness) is the third essential attribute for leaders - an awareness of self. Understanding what it's like to be on the other side of you as a leader. Do you understand how your engagement with people affects and impacts them?

All 3 attributes are essential for the leader worth following. But here's the challenge for most of us. We have focused nearly all of our development on the area of knowledge. When we're faced with knowledge or the opportunity to learn, we often will sit up and listen. We write it down and we try to apply it.

However, the internet has changed this classic paradigm of leadership. Very few people want to pay for knowledge anymore, because it can be free. To be a leader worth following in the new world, you must also possess the capacity to connect with people in authentic relationship and know yourself and the impact of your interactions with your family, with your team members, with your clients, and with others.

When you're willing to grow intentionally in Knowledge, Connection, and Awareness, you will have a far greater impact than just the skills or competency that you have accumulated over time.

We'll look at the 3 essential attributes more in depth over the next few sessions.

But first, let's look at Knowledge or Competency, Expertise, Education, Experience...

When it comes to developing knowledge, there are 2 concepts that you need to be aware of in order to be most effective.

1. Intentional or Accidental

Are you living intentionally or accidentally? Are you working intentionally or accidentally? The tool that we use is intentional or accidental. This tool helps us ask the question - Am I being intentional in each area of influence in my life, my work, and my leadership?

Am I intentionally growing my skills, my knowledge, and expertise? Or, is it occurring or not occurring accidentally?

Knowledge is necessary. In fact, relevant knowledge is necessary. And to continue to develop relevant knowledge, you need to be very intentional.

We live in a world of distraction. The leader worth following is intentional about how they develop relevant knowledge in this world of chaos, this world of constant distraction that we live in.

Are you living and working Intentionally or Accidentally?

In his classic, *The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway wrote, "I keep them with precision. Only I have no luck anymore. But who knows? Maybe today. Every day is a new day. It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact [or intentional, if you will]. Then when luck comes, you are ready."

When you live intentionally and you intentionally develop relevant knowledge, you are better prepared when opportunities present themselves.

2. The Right Time or The Wrong Time

This tool helps us to consider when is the right time and when is the wrong time. It can help us with tone or tact. It can help us know when the right time to move forward with vision or

execution comes. It can help us better understand consensus and timing, and help us with decisions, with people development, and many other areas of our work and our leadership.

When is it time to step up and lead? It's tough to know because, along with our knowledge and experience, there are so many voices who are speaking into our life, work, and leadership.

One of my favorite movie lines of all time – Will Smith, *The Pursuit of Happiness* - Don't ever let someone tell you that you can't do something.

Because it's true – there are going to be haters. You've likely figured that out. And that's okay, because we can learn from haters.

There is a time to listen. And there are people to whom you should listen. To be honest, there are people I should have listened to more often. But there are also times when it's not productive to listen to the advice of well-meaning people.

Let me tell you a quick story. For us, 2002 was a really good year! That year, we launched 3 companies. We grew from 1 employee (me!) to more than 30, to serve hundreds of clients and organizations all over the world. The company grew faster than I ever imagined it would and larger than I ever envisioned that this company would grow. We purchased 13 commercial and residential properties, and that year I met my wife. That was a pretty good year!

At the height of this chaotic time in our life and in my work, I considered purchasing this commercial property. This was a decision that if I move forward with, it would be the largest investment that I had ever made.

Since it was such a significant decision with far-reaching impact, I consulted with several people, who I trusted greatly – one of the individuals was a real estate expert. After surveying the property with me, I remembered the day that we sat down on the couch in my office and he made this statement. He said, "After looking at this property and all that it would take to make this property profitable, I think it would be a mistake to purchase this property.

To be honest, the property was in rough shape. But I could see something that he did not – I envisioned a beautiful facility teeming with young, passionate leaders working together toward a bold, compelling vision. I had a decision to make that day. Will I listen to him, or not?

For me, the decision wasn't easy – in part, because there had been times early in my career when I had faced the same dilemma – should I listen to this voice of reason, to the voice of experience? Or should I not listen?

And through these experiences, I've learned that there are times when I should listen and there are times when I should not.

Since I had been very intentional about discovering and communicating my vision and our vision with our team, I had also learned to draw a very distinct line at my vision and passion. I had learned to ignore opinions that will take me off track.

The truth is, when you're leading, some people won't get it right away. In some cases, you are going to need to exercise patience, and in some cases, more patience than you ever thought you would have to exercise, so you can give them a chance to catch up.

Yet, there may still be those who are content with their own inexperience. Even the best leaders have learned to pull the plug on naive advice.

Some people who can't do something themselves will want to tell you that you can't do it. Some people are just chronically negative.

Here's what I want you to hear. Great leaders don't expect everyone to get excited about their excitement. Why is that? Because there will be some times that your intensity is going to confront the passivity of other people.

Some people will be inspired by the vision. They'll buy in. They'll take ownership. And they'll champion the cause and support it all along the way. These are the people that you want to ensure are on board.

Others will be intimidated and mask their discomfort with criticism.

Keep in mind, if you choose to ignore the advice of a mentor, there will be a cost. Consider the question: If I ignore their counsel, will the cost be worth it?

My dilemma turned into the best business decision that I ever made. I bought the property – and 5 years later we sold it for more than 3 times the purchase price. In this situation, I'm glad I didn't listen.

Many of the experiences along my journey are quite simply the byproduct of the advice of one person who, years earlier, encouraged me to chase my vision; encouraged me to envision something that was so bold and so compelling and would serve as a giant magnet pulling me toward it. That person was my dad. He challenged me – If you have a vision, go get it. Period! And I'm glad that I listened.

In his book, *Wild at Heart*, John Eldredge writes, "Stop shrinking back from challenging situations. Step boldly into them. Let people feel the full weight of your experience, your education, and your expertise, and let them learn to deal with it."

If you want to be a leader worth following, you will need to be:

1. Intentional about growth, about developing your knowledge, your relationships, and your awareness.
2. Be willing to consider: Is it the right time or the wrong time for this action?

If you haven't already, take a moment right now to download the Worksheet on this page and complete the action steps for this session.

Next Session

In this session, we looked at what it means to be a Leader Worth Following and we looked at the first of 3 essential attributes of The Leader Worth Following - Knowledge.

In the next session, we will look at #2 Connection (or Relationship) and why it's essential for the Leader Worth Following.

Remember, when it comes to developing your own leadership skills, 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