



Session 2.12 | Developing Your Leadership Skills Part 2

So, in the last session, we began looking at what you can do to intentionally develop your leadership skills. And we looked at 3 Fast Action Tips:

1. Invest in You
2. Simplify
3. The 4C's tool

In this session, we are going to look at 2 more Fast Action Tips to help you to intentionally develop leadership skills.

Fast Action Step #4 - Make Decisions that Matter.

I'm sure you figured it out by now that you'll have to be willing to feel awkward if you're ever going to accomplish anything worthwhile. What you're doing will seem foolish at times – to yourself and to others. The truth is – you're never going to be more than 80% sure anyway. So, the awkward feeling is natural.

So, the best course of action is to go ahead and make the decision. Don't put it off any longer - just make the decision.

Great leaders make great decisions. And they start by clarifying their bold, compelling vision. Again, this one decision to clarify vision makes thousands of future decisions for them.

They first need clarity for themselves. Then they work together with team members and key stakeholders. And they don't expect everyone to get excited about their excitement.

Why is that? Your intensity will confront the passivity of others.

Some people will be inspired by your vision. They'll buy in and they'll take ownership. They'll champion the cause and support it all along the way. But others will be intimidated and mask their discomfort with criticism.

Criticism is a mask for a fragile ego – because people criticize what they don't like about themselves. So, prepare yourself for it now!

There have been times when I have chosen to invest significant time and energy in numerous projects and initiatives which appeared foolish to many people. And I'll admit some of them were foolish. But most of them weren't – and they worked. I grew. The team grew. The organization grew.

Remember – what is lauded as brilliance after the fact often feels like foolishness in the moment.

Several years ago, I heard a well-respected administrator caution a young leader. He said to him, “You’re often way ahead of people in your thinking. You should really consider slowing down a little bit.” What he was trying to do was to save the guy some grief. But what the administrator was really saying was that the new leader looked foolish sometimes.

Your vision and passion won’t always make logical sense to other people. Some people will even tell you. And that’s okay!

Decide right now that you’re going to live out your purpose and vision with passion – even if it means embarrassing yourself in the process, because that’s leadership.

Why do we care if it looks a little awkward anyway? What if we didn’t mind the awkward moments? Would it change the way that we approach our life and our work?

What decision have you been delaying because it seems a little foolish to you or those around you?

We all obsess over decision-making in one form or another. To help me move forward, I regularly remind myself that everything is an experiment. This has become a guiding principle for me. Because if everything is an experiment, then when things don’t go as planned, it’s not really a failure. We simply tried something and it didn’t work. Now we know it won’t work and that way and we can try something else.

Because I have a huge vision for my life, my work, my family, sometimes I’m going to look a little foolish. And that’s okay.

Discovering my passion and living out my vision have required me to make myself extremely vulnerable – to my family, to my team, to my leaders, to mentors and coaches.

This is not easy to do. I’ve had to get rid of things that I found my identity, my comfort in. And you’ll feel like you’re losing yourself in the process. But it is only in losing yourself for the benefit of other people that you truly find yourself.

To be most effective in your life and your work, make the success of other people your top priority. Yes, there will be times that people will take advantage of you. But more often, they will place high value on your transparency and your authenticity. And if they don’t – that’s okay too. It was just an experiment.

What is it that you find your identity in – that you have gripped so tightly that no one in the world could pry from your grasp?

It's time to loosen it up, to hold those things with an open hand, to stick your neck out, to make the leap, to take the plunge, to go out on a limb – that's where the fruit is anyway!

It may seem a little weird. You may feel awkward. Others may call you foolish. But it's worth it! Make decisions that matter and your life, and your work and your relationships will experience dramatic improvements that you've been searching for.

Fast Action Tip #5 - Ownership vs. Buy-in

Many leaders know that their organization and people have far more potential than the results they are getting currently. They try for years to motivate, energize, bribe, coerce, and manipulate their people and leaders to higher levels of performance. And it doesn't work.

One of the primary reasons many leaders struggle to motivate team members is because they are SEEKING BUY-IN rather than GIVING OWNERSHIP.

And the reason why many leaders make the mistake of seeking buy-in is because they don't understand the difference between Buy-in and Ownership.

With Buy-in, a leader develops a plan or a vision, a new product or service, and then takes it to their team members for input, feedback, and ultimately, buy-in.

Buy-in starts with the leader. Ideas are developed separately. They seek consensus after-the-fact.

Many small- and mid-size organizations struggle with Buy-in. This approach is more difficult to get-away-with in larger organizations.

Ownership is quite different.

With Ownership, a leader provides strategy. However, the team develops the vision with open-handed guidance of the leader. Ownership isn't something you seek. It's intrinsic. Ownership is the by-product of healthy leadership.

Ownership starts with the team together with the leader. It's not faux feedback. Ownership is a proactive strategy in which the leader and the team co-create.

In our experience with teams and leaders of organizations, we've helped hundreds of organizations work through vision and strategic planning. Nearly 100% of the time, the leaders and organizations are looking for Buy-in versus Ownership.

This is a huge mistake!

Ownership results in engagement. Buy-in results in compliance.

Lead team members to take ownership and they will take responsibility. Seeking Buy-in creates an ultimate environment of apathy.

The culture of Ownership is energizing. Scrambling for Buy-in is draining.

Teach them to focus on serving other people (team members, customers, and clients) rather than themselves by first modeling it for yourself.

When you do, you'll see your people, your team, and your organization tap into their full potential. You'll finally get the results you were just about to give up on.

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

If you haven't already, be sure to download the Worksheet for this session and complete the Action Steps that go along with this session.

Remember, it's applying the learning that makes the difference. It's where you see the transformation.

In Module 2, so far, we have looked at 5 Fast Action Steps to help you to intentionally develop your leadership skills to lead from the middle more effectively.

Next Session

In the next session, we are going to look at what to do when you are working with a poor leader.

I'll see you in the next session.