



# Geared for Success

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## Leadership and Mentoring

Remember someone who believed in you, pushed you forward and provided you with guidance that enabled you to move in a new, better direction? Chances are you still have deep respect for this person. Perhaps they came along (or you sought them out) at an important time of your life. You were ready and interested in bigger challenges, wanted to be a stronger contributor or needed their strength in your life. In its truest sense, mentoring is a partnership where a more knowledgeable/experienced person helps another person to develop and grow. Leaders have a responsibility to mentor others. Most do so formally or informally sometime throughout their careers.

So, what are the best ways to mentor and help others reach their highest potential? First and foremost, you need to be a trusted advisor. Support and honesty are at the core of good mentoring. A mentor/mentee relationship is a very personal one. You need to see the mentee as a gift--someone with whom you can inspire, provide insights and help overcome challenges. In other words, being a mentor is not something you "fit into" your schedule. It is something you prepare for and look forward to.

Lindsay Kolowich, author of "How to Be an Amazing Mentor: 12 Ways to Make a Positive Impact on Others", outlines practical ideas that can make a difference in how you work as a mentor. Here are her tips:

1. **Approach people in different ways** - Get to know your mentee
2. **Be forthcoming** about mistakes you have made--share your own vulnerabilities

3. **Lead by example** - Be consistent with words and actions
4. **Listen** - Remember you are a sounding board
5. **Be patient** - allow for mistakes
6. **Demonstrate the importance of lifelong learning**
7. **Look for opportunities to praise**



8. **Help the mentee problem solve** instead of jumping in with the answer--ask questions about his/her thought process
9. **Carefully assess** the skills, abilities and talents of your mentee so you can best assist
10. **Be networked** in your organization so that you can introduce your mentee to others now and in the future
11. **Don't assume anything** about your mentee--Ask
12. **Understand the political climate** of the organization and be able to provide feedback accordingly

A positive mentor/mentee relationship is one of deep respect. Mentors have the responsibility to tell the truth no

matter how difficult. Helping someone succeed is very gratifying but can only be done by sincerely steering that person in the right direction. Great mentors are committed to the role and make themselves approachable and available.

In a study about business mentoring by Bob Aubrey and Paul Cohen, several techniques were identified as effective ways to approach learning with mentees. These techniques provide teachable moments that expand the mentee/mentor relationship. The techniques are as follows:

- **Accompanying** - taking part in the learning side-by-side
- **Sowing** - Knowing what you are advising may not be understood at the moment, but may be utilized later

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**"A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could."**

Unknown

## Leadership and Mentoring

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- **Catalyzing** - Pushing the mentee into change provoking a different way of thinking or reordering of what they know
- **Showing** - Making something understandable using your own behavior as an example
- **Harvesting** - "Picking the ripe fruit"-Creating awareness of what was learned by the mentee's experiences

So many benefits come from mentoring - benefits to the organization, benefits to the mentor, benefits to the mentee. As a mentor you can see firsthand your positive impact on another person. It can re-energize your own career, open doors for new

opportunities and make you a better leader and person. By giving back, you get so much more.

Resources: "Working Wisdom: Timeless Skills and Vanguard Strategies for Learning Organizations", by Bob Aubrey & Paul Cohen; "How to Be a Great Mentor", by Jacquelyn Smith

**"We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own."**

Ben Sweetland

## Reducing Stress for Your Team

In good measure, stress can be a positive motivator, help keep people "on top of their game" and push people beyond their boundaries. It is what keeps them vigilant and ready for anything that the workplace can throw their way. However, with ever-increasing demands, tight deadlines, long hours, etc., stress can interfere with productivity and performance. It can leave your team members drained, overwhelmed, unimaginative, fearful and sick.

As a leader you can impact the amount of stress your team is feeling. There are specific things you can do and say that lower stress levels. You set the tone for the work environment. Key components for reducing stress on your team are:

- **Be a positive role model.** How you handle stress is noticed and reflected by your employees. Develop and effectively use emotional intelligence competencies of: stress tolerance, impulse control, reality testing, emotional self-awareness and emotional expression to monitor your reactions to stress.
- **Know the hot button stress issues.** Be fully aware of what areas of your workplace are causing stress. Is it problems with another department? Is it failing equipment? Is it understaffing? What are the biggest stressors? How can you solve or influence these problems? At the very least, how can you be more empathetic to your staff in how they deal



with them?

- **Communicate with your people one-on-one.** Listening in a face-to-face sit down meeting not only makes your employees feel heard, you will learn about the details of what is going on.
- **Be transparent.** Be truthful and honest. Hidden agendas and secrets can cause stress as employees try to second guess situations.
- **Take a strong look at employee workload distribution and deadlines.** Are the workloads distributed fairly and in accordance with your employee's abilities and resources? Are deadlines realistic?

• **Deal with workplace conflicts.** Handle what needs to be addressed.

Even though you can't control everything, and stress is inevitable, your leadership can get the team through the rough times. Be sure to offer praise and recognition-thank your employees for what they do and do well. Bring the team together to celebrate after particularly difficult times. Know that your leadership can have a powerful influence over job satisfaction, productivity and employee retention.

Resource: "Stress in the Workplace-Managing Job and Work Stress", by Jeanne Segal, Melinda Smith, Lawrence Robinson and Robert Segal

**"In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers."**

Fred Rogers

## MBTI and Times of Change

Organizational change is a constant. As leaders we are responsible for introducing change, leading and managing it and bringing our people along the change journey. For any change, there are gains and losses that occur. According to research by Nancy J. Barger and Linda K. Kirby, MBTI Masters, the preferences that most frequently affect the psychological impact of change is the Thinking-Feeling dimension. Important to note that both thinking and feeling behaviors are needed for how leaders act, coach others and bring the team through change.

### Strengths of Thinking Preferences During Change

- Exhibit a calm acceptance; can detach from their own emotions
- Step away and apply logic
- Are able to cut loose and move on

### Potential Problems of Thinking Preferences During Change

- Are uncomfortable and impatient with others' emotions

- Their own emotions that have been pushed aside and unprocessed may come forth in other ways

### Strengths of Feeling Preferences During Change

- Seek and offer support-good listeners
- Reach out to other people-proactive
  - Expect that their will be emotions and are able to acknowledge/notice them

### Potential Problems of Feeling Preferences During Change

- Get distracted and have a difficult time getting past the personal issues that arise
- May overdo the supportive role even though it is time to move on
- Can get stuck in negative emotions that they are hearing from everyone else

As you reflect on your own MBTI type preferences, think of ways you are able to incorporate opposite preferences into your leadership style. Each offers ways to adapt to change while helping others do the same.

Resource: [Type & Change](#), by Nancy J. Barger and Linda K. Kirby



**"Life is like a field of newly fallen snow.  
Where I choose to walk every step will show."**

Denis Waitley

## Why You Should Reconnect with Dormant Ties

As you know, networking can be a powerful resource for opening new opportunities. This skill can help you find your dream job, acquaint you with others in your industry, build mentoring relationships and much more. A recent article in INC. magazine suggested that the most valuable people in your network might be the most overlooked-your "dormant ties". "Dormant ties" are those people who you do not currently keep in touch with and perhaps have not had a relationship with in quite some time.

A research study by MIT Sloan found that reconnecting relationships is not only interesting, but very valuable professionally. When executives in the study were asked to reconnect with dormant ties, they often found the advice they received was more useful than their current relationships had given them. Additionally, by reigniting those dormant relationships, the executives felt more novelty in the responses and greater shared perspective. By far, the payoff for reaching out was worth the effort.

As adults we accumulate thousands of relationships over time. Most relationships simply fade away as our lives change with relocations, jobs, family responsibilities and busy life circumstances. It is easy to neglect relationships that are not visible in our every day lives. And, frankly, some relationships are worth nurturing long term, others not so much.

So, what holds leaders back from reconnecting? Mostly, the idea of not wanting to impose on others or trying to look opportunistic stops us from making that call or sending that email. It is generally a feeling of awkwardness to overcome. Some tips for making the connection and overcoming the mental constraints:

- **Being sincere and upfront** - If you have a question or need advice, ask it rather than try to walk around it.
- **Being appreciative** for what the person's presence brought to you in the past.
- **Replying to a post** the person has made to begin the renewal process.
- **Extending a gracious perspective** of what you admired in the person.
- **Sending a brief personal message** to connect on social media (e.g. LinkedIn).

Reconnecting with other professionals can bring tremendous insights into our work lives. Take the time to really look at your network. Who have you not communicated with in a long time? Whose insights do you miss? Then, take the time to reach out!

Resource: "The Power of Reconnection - How Your Dormant Ties Can Surprise You", by Daniel Z. Levin, Jorge Walter and J. Keith Murnighan, MIT Sloan Management Review



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### Pack Your Career Bags with Class

Hooray! You have landed that new position and are ready to move on. But, before you go, there are some important decisions to make that leave a lasting impression. Exactly how will you make your exit? What kind of image do you want to have in the minds of those you are leaving behind? Remember--Leaving a positive impression is critical to relationships now and in the future. Taking the high road is the only way to go for your career management. Here are some tips for making it happen:

1. **Telling your boss** - Speak one-on-one and well in advance of your desired leave date. This should be the first person in the organization that you tell. A boss should never hear about your new position through the grapevine. Dislike your boss? Pack your bags with class--thank this person for what you learned. Regardless of the situation, you developed and grew under his/her supervision.
2. **Telling your Peers and Employees** - Work with your boss on the timing for telling others about your moving on. Thank people for what you have learned and done. Show authentic appreciation for working with colleagues and having experiences that will stay with you.
3. **Work as Hard as You Normally Do (or Harder)** - Even though your mind might be on your fresh start, leave having known you gave it your all right to the end.
4. **Organize to bridge the gap** - Create a transition plan that helps the next person take over your job role to minimize the disruption.
5. **Stay off social media** - Do not announce your new position until you begin your first day there.

Changing jobs requires a mindset of doing the right thing, having principles about how you leave and being a positive influence right up to your last day.

Resource: "Graceful Exit - Retuning Your Career",  
by Thomas Heath

### How to be a More Responsive Leader

Leaders need to be responsive to their employees, their team and their organization. But what does responsiveness really mean? Responsiveness can be defined in many ways--how a leader has interest and concern for others, a leader's willingness to be collaborative, a leader's understanding of urgency to fulfill workplace needs and a demonstration of responsibility for what needs to be done. Responsiveness takes into account the needs of others with a bigger picture in mind.

In Robert Bacal's article, *The Responsiveness Paradigm*, the author outlines specific competencies needed to develop leadership responsiveness. To be successful at this skill, leaders need to utilize both thinking and emotional skills. Additionally, responsiveness requires high levels of communication skills. The following elements are important for building your responsiveness:

- Active/Reflective listening
- Empathy
- Inclusive body language (e.g. engaged in the conversation through eye contact, leaning in, etc.)
- Openness, sincerity
- Use of cooperative language (e.g. use of non-confrontational questions to build understanding)
- Use of qualifiers instead of absolute statements
- Focus on problem solving vs. blame
- Consistency of talk and behavior (e.g. walking the talk)
- Ability to extract another person's needs from the interaction
- Problem solving skills

Once mastered the elements for responsiveness translate into relationship building and trust. Leaders who are responsive are perceived as helpful, supportive, accomplished and caring. They can get more done through their connections with others. Responsiveness is important for cooperative communication, improved work efficiencies and building high performing, satisfied team members.