

# Effective Leadership

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# What is Leadership?

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007).

It is the actions of the followers who determine whether a leader is successful.



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# Many Kinds of Leadership

## Technical

- project lead, program manager, NSF co-PI

## Informal

- getting a paper accepted, building support for faculty candidate, where to eat lunch...

## Professional Activities

- program chair, conference chair, department committee, professional leadership, CRA-W
- standards groups, edit/review

## Formal

- Department Head, Dean, Manager



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# Many Leadership Roles

## Within my organization

Leadership = influence

- “Thought leader” often more important than “chair” or “manager”
- Peer versus cross-cutting committees & task forces

Strategic leadership: set directions, long-term plans

Tactical leadership: develop & implement

## Beyond my organization

Advisor, strategist, liaison

Coordinator, organizer, facilitator



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# Why Bother?

Influence organization in directions you like.  
Have a greater impact through longer lever arm.

Enable “Snowball Effect”

Once you are seen as an effective leader, more opportunities become available.

Provides personal rewards



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# How to Become a Leader?

Act like one: Show initiative & vision.

Be trustworthy

Follow through on commitments in a timely fashion.

Treat people fairly and with respect.

Demonstrate ability to work with others

Let people know you are interested

Work to acquire qualifications

Find a mentor to help



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# How to Become a Leader?

Volunteer for visible committees

Don't wait for someone to ask or invite you

Ask someone to nominate you

Weigh your words

- sound like a leader
- be careful once you're a leader



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# How to Become a Leader?

## Choose your targets

Groups you already know

- Be the first to volunteer

Groups you'd like to know

- Get somebody else to recommend you

## Find ways to make yourself valuable

“Scribes” can have great influence

Suggest activities – and offer to spearhead



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So, now you are a leader...



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# Change

It is okay/great/necessary to change things, but know why you are changing them.

What do you hope to accomplish?

What are the likely and acceptable costs?

How will you know it is working?

Get buy-in as part of the process.

Sometimes the riskiest choice is to try to avoid all risk.



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# Change

- Spend some time determining who are the biggest influencers in the department
  - Many times if you can get them on your side, then your job is easy
  - If not, it's a little harder, but still possible
    - Present your facts... to individuals if necessary
  - Sometimes helpful to bring in experts to support your ideas
- Don't have to be comfortable making tough decisions, but do them fairly



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# Change

Indirect routes are often faster than direct ones

Most people are leery of major changes

“Pilot” projects are less threatening

- Also leave opportunities for course correction

Gradually extend the reach of the pilot

- At each step, study how to make change palatable

Be sensitive – but not too much – to reactions

Expect 20% (but not 50%) to push back

Sometimes obstacles are a signal to slow down or re-group



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# Communication

Provide a stable environment so people know how to succeed.

Allows them to make decisions you would agree with even if they can't reach you.

Don't be the bottleneck

Respect the time of people dependent on you.  
May require increased delegation.

Listen well

Make sure you can summarize others' positions to their satisfaction.

Be open to negative feedback

Otherwise, situations can blow up.



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# Communication

Learn to be direct when making requests

Not always easy

Check in with the people who work for you  
to see how everything is going

What's working, what's not



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# Meetings

Plan meetings to be productive

What do you want to accomplish?

What is the most effective way to do that?

A lot of the work of a successful meeting is done in advance.

Avoid putting people on the spot

Find out people's positions before asking for public comments.



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# Meetings

- Create a shared agenda, Asana
- Allow everyone to add items
- Determine appropriate times for each topic and keep to it... can always revisit it next meeting



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# Meetings

Don't stint on preparation time

Most effective work is done before the meeting

Formulate questions & circulate in advance

“Socialize” key or contentious issues one-on-one

It's your responsibility to keep things moving

Help others respect the “value” of each meeting hour

- Calculate hourly cost; remind group how long it took to find a meeting time, etc.

Figure out gentle, but clear ways to interrupt people



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# Constant Improvement

Learn from watching others

What do they do that you like? dislike?

Borrow, but adapt to who you are.

Continue to find mentors



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# Constant Improvement

- Take advantage of workshops like these
- Learn to delegate... wisely!
- Review last year's schedule and put notes in calendar to keep on track



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# Constant Improvement

Make it a goal to learn something new from every meeting (or speaker)

Observe how people react to ideas from A versus B

- What makes the difference? (eloquence? rationale? assertiveness?)

Figure out when/why people change their opinions

- What makes an argument persuasive?
- What prompts people to compromise?

Bottom line: A few people are “natural leaders”  
... the rest of us have to learn



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