

LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE



99% OF ALL LEADERSHIP OCCURS NOT FROM THE TOP BUT FROM THE MIDDLE OF AN ORGANIZATION.

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Agreement:

Management is based on one's positional authority and processes.

Leadership is based on relationships and the ability to influence others in the pursuit of goals from anywhere within the organization.



Who's in the middle?

Anyone who is working or living in group of 3 or more is at some point in the middle. Whether you are a parent, a good friend, a manager, supervisor or the boss, you have a role to play.

What is critical for effectively leading from the middle?

Here are the **key 9 principles** of leading from the middle:

1. **Direct Debates:** It is about facilitating open and honest discussions, putting reality on the table and actively working through it. It is about getting candid advice, absorbing it, and then acting on it.
2. **Mindful Listening:** It is about *zipping it* and tuning in *fully* to really understand what family members, customers, employees, and partners are saying. It is listening with your ears, eyes, and open mind, giving complete attention to their successes and suggestions.
3. **Team Flexibility:** It is about setting clear goals and then organizing around them. People will not work in silos, necessarily, but will be brought together based on their strengths that will enhance the opportunity for mission success.
4. **Accountably Free:** It is about giving people the freedom to innovate, create, and make things happen, aligned with the organization's strategy, goals, objectives, and values. Along with

- the freedom to perform is the accountability to do the right things.
5. **Valuably Fail:** It is about thinking and doing creatively, acknowledging risk is part of the formula. In failing, *if it happens*, it shifts to learning and getting better from the experiences and diligent work.
 6. **Relentless Learning:** It is about spending time exploring, reading, and attending workshops, classes and conferences that enable our minds to expand and our eyes to open to how we can be better and do better. It is about having conversations with others – team members and mentors – to gain their perspectives, insights, and knowledge.
 7. **Building Relationships:** Effective leaders are influencers. They take the time to build a relationship that involves trust. These leaders are consistent so that the relationship is natural. It is one of trust.

LEADING THROUGH THE RANKS

Leading Up – the hardest of the 3 influencing areas

It is all about respect whether it is respect for your family elders or your boss. It is about appreciating and understanding their vision. It is about doing your best work. Most importantly, it is about communicating.

Leading Across – the law of reciprocity

This is where your skills are honed. If you can learn to effectively influence across peers without using your title, you are ready for greater leadership. Here it is about supporting, giving back and knowing when to fold. Smart leaders pick what is important to them to help them make their goals. Not everything has equal weight. Needing to always be right can sabotage your career.



Leading Down – see everyone as a potential 10

Everyone you influence or lead that is less experienced should feel like they have much to offer. Your job is to mentor. Always have the goal that they should do the job better than you would have, because they have guidance.

The middle has value.

Think of middle children – they are usually the ones who bring siblings together, managing relationships diplomatically and effectively. It teaches us the skills to lead with a soft touch and be extremely successful. We do this with our families, so the skill is there. Take those same skills to the individuals at work.

Leading effectively:

Understand the corporate vision

Lead with integrity and respect

Have self – belief

Be observant

Be flexible

Explore your views

Relentlessly Learn

Lead failure to learning

Facilitate discussions

Guide and support

Make decisions

Get feedback

Enjoy leadership

Go to the people. Learn from them. Live with them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. The best of leaders when the job is done, when the task is accomplished, the people will say we have done it ourselves.

Lao Tzu

