

Take the Lead: Do More, Be More and Achieve More!

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Administrative professionals and executive assistants often see themselves in their support roles as being “non-leaders”. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth!

You may not be the CEO or VP of the company, but you *are* a leader. A senior level Human Resources associate once said something profound. She said it was the administrator’s job to make her job important. Each administrator

needs to raise her or his sights to elevate the career so that she or he, and others who follow, can grow and become better in their skills.

Leading is investing; you can lead others by investing in them. Help them learn to do better by having the skills and confidence to do better. If everyone waits for someone else to lead, no one will dance! So, rather than wait for someone in your organization to form that

committee, write that newsletter, research a new training course, (do you know where this is going?) you can *lead* by example and begin to do just that.

It should not be up to only a few to take the lead. Instead of looking to others to form a path or clear the jungle ahead, why not “see it and own it” and do something about what you’d like to see or wish were reality? Each

administrative or executive assistant has special gifts and talents. Start there. Use what you are good at and share it with those around you.

- Can you give a presentation on your stellar meetings?
- Can you share what you're learning from this book?
- Can you prepare a solution and present it to the right people instead of just complaining?
- What do you wish for at your work?
 - An administrator's SharePoint or Wiki-page?
 - Training in project management?
 - Tech training on emerging equipment?

When you develop your leadership ability, you will feel strong and empowered. You'll have a tiger in your tank! Feeling empowered will make you believe you can do more, be more, and achieve more. And you know what will happen then? Having raised your confidence level, you will do just that. You will be amazed that you are no longer afraid to try other new things that one time, long ago, created anxiety. You'll be able to create and give presentations, manage committees, write with confidence, and speak up to offer comments and opinions in meetings, all because you demonstrated leadership to yourself and those around you.

So what are the benefits? You'll have a strong reputation for excellence and responsibility. Management will know you are a "go to" person. You'll be energized and happy at work. You'll be competitive in the job market (inside and outside your organization!) In time, you'll not only be respected and appreciated by management, but you'll likely receive better assignments. You'll add value every day.

People are often confused by "lead" because they think leaders are those at the pinnacle of a company or who have others reporting to them. What they do not realize is that "to lead" means to take the awareness you have about an issue, problem or lack, and then use that awareness as fuel to step out and resolve it. Exhibiting leadership will set an example, showing others what is possible. It raises the bar in dramatic fashion.

Lead is a verb (action) but it is also a noun (a mindset). Leaders are not born; they are made. You can develop your lead by reading books, blogs and training your mind to think strategically; look for initiatives you care about, learn to develop solutions for them, and then implement them.

Leaders are not found on the sofas of life. Leaders are in the trenches, driving the bus, leading

the charge, and developing the resources and respect of others.

Like General Patton stated, you can lead, follow or get out of the way. Leaders may not always be at the top, but they are always out in front.

If you choose to follow, your own passions and great ideas won't be developed. Such a waste of raw talent! If you get out of the way, you'll be left in the dust. And that's not great for your career or reputation.

So, here's the question: What would happen if we each got out in front of a great idea, a new resource we developed, or a cause we cared deeply about? Wouldn't the world be a much better place, and our companies successful, less stressed and more profitable?

How?

To initiate basic lead strategies:

- Inventory and create a list of potential items you are aware of and care about.
- Pick an item from your list and prepare a plan of action to change or improve it.
- Work to solve, develop, create or prepare an improvement idea.

This small micro-climate of leadership will show you what it's like to step out and create change under your care. You can learn a lot from this exercise that will enable you to step out more and more. You will gain resources, develop solutions and build your confidence.

Problem solve

Leaders bring solutions to the table; everyone else brings problems, hoping a leader will develop a solution.

Leadership lessons

- Results won the right way lead to reward.
- Your raw talent must not be wasted.
- Inspiring others will also inspire you.
- Lead is a mind-set.
- It's not about perfection. It's about excellence, every day. Live it yourself and teach it to others around you.
- Leaders embrace the creativity in others.
- Paddle toward what you want. Don't just float in the boat.
- Leaders may not always be at the top, but they are always out in front.

Christa worked with two other administrators, jointly splitting the nation for accounts receivable work. Christa was responsible for the

area west of Michigan to Hawaii. It was a big assignment, but she really enjoyed it.

In the early fall, Christa realized that she, Barb and Tony (who handled the East and South, respectively) hadn't discussed year-end vacation coverage. So, Christa contacted them and created a chart to record their out-of-office times to check for conflicts and provide coverage.

Christa was motivated by the fact that she was moving and needed a specific week off. By asking for their input, she discovered it was the same week Barb wanted to take! Barb volunteered to move four days to another time, but she really needed one day off that same week.

Christa told Barb and Tony that she would cover Barb's day off, even while moving, since Barb was so understanding. Christa recorded everyone's time off and the coverage assignments through New Year's, and they sent it to their manager.

Christa demonstrated leadership by providing a solution and creating a plan of action to benefit them all while maintaining responsibility for their respective assignments.

Create calm out of chaos

In World War II, Great Britain artists created public posters that stated, "Keep Calm and Carry On," to encourage the citizens to remain calm, even as they prepared for the enemy invasion. While our office challenges may not be as dire, these words are still applicable to us today.

Keeping calm and carrying on means you will not succumb to the chaos and confusion around you. You will maintain an eco-climate within you that is settled and balanced within you.

Kelly worked in a busy legal office, supporting a manager and staff who were very involved with a whirlwind of busy assignments, travel and constant activity. Three of her principal supports were planning to take extended international trips, traveling to several countries in a short timeframe.

It might have been easy for others to become anxious and stressed over the multiple visas, passport books that needed additional pages, and making complex travel itineraries, but not for Kelly. She planned the work carefully, laying out the different visa applications in a way that made sense to her.

She strategically handled each country's set of visa documents for each traveler, highlighting which documents required extra visa photos,

copies of educational diplomas, and even whether to sign in blue or black ink! She next created a Word document of the pertinent and confidential information for each traveler so it would be easy to retrieve for future trips (they had more trips planned for the second quarter).

By remaining calm and collected, and thinking through all the steps and planning her work well, Kelly had all the paperwork turned in promptly without any mistakes. She also stepped out and led the charge to have all the paperwork assembled, completed and submitted well in advance of the travel date.

Be results-driven

Successful leaders do not think, “What are the tasks I have to do today?” They think, “What are the results I have to achieve?” Their tasks then become the vehicles for arriving at their destination. Some of us may arrive to work each day and not think about results. We think only about what comes into our email, or what was left over from yesterday.

A professional is someone who cares about the results, not just the activity. The only catch is that it takes a certain kind of person.

Michael Hammer, Author,
Reengineering the Corporation

Your performance plan may be esoteric in nature, broad-stroked without detail. But to be results driven, you must instead begin to see the end goal and then work backwards to make it happen. Once you work with results in mind it becomes easy to plan what needs to happen today to achieve “X” at the planned date.

In business, as in life, results count. “A wishin’ and a hopin’” aren’t the drivers of success. What results do you want to achieve? By when? What will the results look like? Now, take that image of successful results and picture what must happen and in what order it must happen to flow smoothly and efficiently toward completion.

Don’t confuse. . .

Activity	with	RESULTS
Hard work	with	RESULTS
Efficiency	with	RESULTS

Inspire creativity in others

Leaders inspire others around them to be creative. Leaders make safe environments for people to unleash their potential, their creativity, and their problem-solving skills. Leaders promote brainstorming without judgment, creative environments and latitude to look at problems as opportunities.

Leaders know that engaging others and then getting out of their way is often the best motivation toward creating winning strategies. Leaders support but do not hover. They encourage but do not criticize. They build their teammates up, and are appreciative of their contributions. Leaders embrace the creativity in others.

Have the courage to be the best

Leaders develop courage so they can have the stamina to go the distance and continue to be leaders, day after day. It is not a title; leadership is a way of life.

- Be your authentic self and live within your means. Reflect who you really are at all times. Be your best self.
- Opportunity is often disguised as a problem. Embrace change as your helpful friend, not an enemy. You never know what great event or privilege might come that is just around the corner!
- Be open to learn. Stay mentally nimble at all times. Seek knowledge.
- Look for the “raft experience”. Fans of river rafting love the thrills and chills. So look for the raft experience today. Where can you find adventure in what you are doing right now at your desk? Does today offer an exciting opportunity for you?
- Paddle your own canoe. Don’t let life “happen” to you. Get out your oar and paddle your canoe toward excitement and the goals you dream about. Don’t just float in the boat of life. Paddle!

Encourage excellence (not perfection)

Perfection is a lovely ideal – and certainly helps us determine how high to raise the bar. But it’s often not attainable, and that can rob an individual of enthusiasm. By contrast, excellence is a healthy goal – one that can be worked toward every day. It’s been said that success is 99% perspiration and only 1% inspiration. Leaders create atmospheres of trust and openness. They encourage others to do the work and excel, but not to stress over perfection.

Stressing over perfection can actually hamper one’s ability (such as being so very afraid to make mistakes that you make more).

Do More... Be More... Achieve More! Step Up to Leadership Today!

about the author



Joan Burge is known as the red-lipstick-wearing “Rock Star” of administrative and executive Assistant training and a successful entrepreneur who created a unique niche in 1990 by founding a training company that would provide sophisticated, robust educational programs and information to administrative professionals. Joan is an accomplished author (8 books), professional speaker, consultant and corporate trainer. She is the creator of: *Annual Conference for Administrative Excellence™*; *World Class Assistant™* Certification course; *Star Achievement Series®* Certification and Designation course; 30+ customized workshops, 200+ educational videos, 150+ articles and 900+ blogs for executive and administrative Assistants. Her company, Office Dynamics International, is a global industry leader which offers a broad range of solutions and provides high-performance, sophisticated executive and administrative Assistant training and coaching. For more information visit www.officedynamics.com.

