

Stepping into Leadership for the First Time

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A Guest Post by Marwa Hijazi,
University Alliance
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Leadership Links)

Irene Becker, Just Coach It-The 3Q Edge™ | (IQ-EQ-SQ) Reach-Resonance-Results 3Q Leadership™ Blog- 42,000+ Social Media Followers & Growing!



Excitement. Anxiety. Trepidation. Uncertainty. These feelings are perfectly natural when you are called into leadership for the first time. After all, there is a lot riding on you – and your team will be closely watching your every move. Naturally, you want to hit it out of the park and impress them, as well

as your supervisors.

So, let's review what makes a great leader, and show you how to get there.

Great Leadership Improves the Workplace

It's clear that every business relies on solid leadership in order to succeed. Staffers want to work for people they trust and admire. When they find a great leader, their productivity and morale improves. They are engaged in the company's mission and inspired to help meet its objectives. They're self-motivated to meet their deadlines and to come up with new ideas and solutions. They rarely miss a day of work and customer service improves.

The bottom line: great leadership means a more successful business, with higher sales, lower costs, less turnover and happier people.

Working Through Struggles

Every leader struggles at times. Here are some tips for working through difficult times:

- **Make the tough decisions:** That's exactly what people need you to do. Learn by watching leaders that you admire and keeping abreast of industry news. Don't be afraid to change your mind when necessary.
- **Don't worry about being liked:** Your job is to do the right thing, not the most popular thing. Be respectful and fair, but willing to make difficult decisions.
- **It's okay to be human:** Remember that you're working with people who have outside lives and stresses to deal with. Your team should be able to approach you and know they

are appreciated.

- Believe in what you're doing: If you don't believe in it, nobody else will. A faltering leader can be difficult to follow, so stay strong.

Simple Efforts That Make You a Better Leader

When you step into leadership, everything changes. You're perceived differently. You may even walk a little taller! But don't make the mistake of resting on your laurels. Being a great leader means making a consistent effort to improve. Try these simple efforts that make a big difference:

- Keep listening, but also observe: Listening is the number one attribute of great leaders. Just quiet your mind and truly hear what people are saying. And keep your eyes open to see what's going on around you. Being observant can help you head off trouble before it begins.
- Step out of your comfort zone: Try something new, like traveling to a new place. It's a great way to expose yourself to learning opportunities. Take a new route to work, or try a different mode of transportation. Make an effort to talk to people you don't usually interact with.
- Take responsibility: You'll earn the respect of your peers and team when you're accountable for results, good or bad. Own mistakes, even if they aren't your fault (but especially when they are). Then, move on.
- Empower yourself: Recognize your own power, and stay above others' opinions of you.

Lead Your Team – Don't Control Them

Team members are motivated differently, but nobody likes to

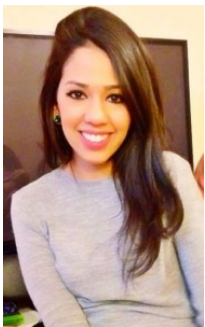
feel controlled. The workplace of the past might have been filled with overzealous bosses and disempowered employees, but that won't fly today. Create a positive company culture and you'll have happy, engaged and creative people who produce, sell and contribute to the bottom line.

Keep in mind these three guidelines for leading – not controlling – your team:

1. **Everyone is important:** Recognize that every team member is contributing to the project. Give public praise for a job well done.
2. **Everyone is creative:** Instill an entrepreneurial spirit in your team. Ask for ideas and encourage brainstorming.
3. **Everyone is heard:** The importance of feeling heard cannot be overstated. Whether an idea is acted upon or not, appreciate the person and their effort.

Knowing What to Expect Will Help You Prepare for Leadership

The best time to prepare yourself to become a leader is before you are called into leadership. You can expect people to look to you for answers while watching your every move. Stay focused, keep listening and learn how to work through the struggles that every leader faces. You'll be well on your way to becoming a trusted, respected leader.



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Marwa Hijazi writes about leadership and negotiations on behalf of University Alliance, a facilitator of *leadership and management programs online*,

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More? Almost done. Just one more thing!

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