



Becoming a Business Leader

Becoming a business leader is not inherent in owning and operating a business. If you find work is piling-up, finances are feeling uncontrolled, customers are unhappy, or your employees are showing increased disrespect, chances are you might have a problem with your leadership abilities.

Before opening a new business, entrepreneurs should examine and practice their personal leadership skills to better prepare themselves for the challenges of self-employment. The following are ways that anyone, especially business owners, can improve their leadership skills and see better results in the workplace.

Be knowledgeable.

Being an expert in your field shows a special level of commitment. Acquiring first-hand experience shows you care deeply about understanding what you do to partners, coworkers and employees. Pay attention to the details. Know what you are talking about, and only talk about what you know. Be willing to learn, eager to listen.

Depending on your industry, there are different ways to gain valuable knowledge. Some businesses can be learned online, or through books. Some fields require college degrees or specific licenses, extensive work experience, or other types of formal education and training. As a professional, it is your responsibility to intimately know your industry, and learn what creates respect for its leaders. Jump on in – you will find that nothing ever teaches as well as experience.

Do your job.

Become known as the one who gets your work done, every time. Doing a job well seems simple, but it is a trait that travels far in business. A common situation with a new business owner is to become swept-up in details of larger projects, and sometimes lose track of simple, daily objectives. Focusing on the job and always finishing the task at-hand will set the bar high for your employees and partners. Dependability is a crucial aspect for creating expectations and setting the stage within your professional circle. Do the job, and lead by example.

Be a leader, not a dictator.

You don't need to act like a dictator to assert your abilities as a leader. Invite creative collaboration and show your employees genuine appreciation for their efforts. Consider the value of showing gratitude in a way employees understand with bonuses, benefits, or other tangible rewards. Keep an open mind to new ideas, and reward them. Hold frequent team meetings to discuss improvements and changes to consider. Work toward goals, and celebrate achievements. Make everyone a part of the success, but also make each individual feel responsible for correcting a mistake found within the organization.

Know when and how to ask for help.

Few business owners can single-handedly keep up with handling all the essential day-to-day operations of a successful small business. There is no shame in requesting help, and there are definitive benefits to asking the right people for help at the right times. Delegating is essential to business survival. Effective business leaders know how much work they can handle on their own and how to assign job duties to the appropriate employees. Surround yourself with solid people you can trust, and allow them to do their jobs for you. Letting go of all the responsibilities of a project or a business can feel like abandonment, but more often than not, delegating authority at the right time allows every business owner to make the business infinitely stronger.

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Take care of the customer.

True business leaders know that incorporating outstanding customer service policies into every decision is the only recipe for success. You can take a few specific steps to ensure your customer always feels welcomed, appreciated and respected. Make sure your employees have excellent people skills; provide occasional sales or discounts to show your appreciation to repeat customers; and, have a reasonable returns/guarantee policy that creates a sense of comfort with a first-time buyer.

It could be argued that business leaders are not born, they are forged. Created by need and lifted by natural talents, they are diamonds that always find a way to shine. Though many traits of a business leader can be considered natural tendencies, there are definitely other aspects that can be learned, practiced and improved with concentrated attention and effort.

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