Work with Others

At a Glance: Galvanize the strengths of others to achieve common goals. Use interpersonal skills to influence, mentor, coach, and develop others. Negotiate and manage conflict.

Understanding Leadership

Leadership is the “relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change,”¹ In other words, leadership is the process of empowering others to maximize their efforts, and engaging them in fulfilling a vision.

Leadership involves a spectrum of skills and abilities ranging from interpersonal and management skills, to analytical and innovative thinking.² Successful leadership manifests in various forms and is measured in a context-dependent manner.³ For instance, successful business leaders, together with their team, boost their company’s growth, whereas the success of political leaders is measured at the level of law and policy implementation which are in turn reflected by the growth of a community. On the other hand, student leaders voice their peers’ concerns and take the lead on promoting initiatives towards enhancing other students’ educational and extra-curricular experience.

Why does it matter?

While successful managers see their projects to completion on time and within budget, leaders possess additional attributes – such as exceptional self-awareness and emotional intelligence – that allow them to influence and inspire others towards performing their best work to accomplishing shared goals.⁴ In addition to being powerful team players, leaders do not wait for others; instead, they proactively take initiatives and bring their teams on board in order to see their ideas flourish.

Leading a team of various experts in order to attain a goal is certainly a more effective strategy than going on a quest alone, regardless of your level of expertise. You will achieve bigger and more meaningful goals as a team by leveraging your collective strengths and contributions. Subsequently, you and your team members experience a higher sense of accomplishment, one of the many reasons people aspire to become leaders in their field.

Cultivating Leadership

There is no one-size-fits-all model of leadership as situations and contexts dictate which leadership style is appropriate. In business, Transformation Leadership has proven to be most effective, whereby emotionally intelligent leaders focus on the individual needs and personal development of their followers.⁵ This leadership style has gained substantial importance due to its significant impact on organizational outcomes since the mid-1980s.⁶ ⁷

A Transformational Leader⁸:

- Is a model of integrity and fairness
- Sets clear goals
- Has high expectations
- Encourages others
- Provides support and recognition
- Prompt people to be emotionally invested

All successful leaders, regardless of their role (e.g., students, CEOs, activists) or leadership style, have two broad character traits in common: willpower and humility.⁹ What made Martin Luther King a successful movement leader? How did Warren Buffett become one of the most successful business leaders in the world?¹⁰ While they had significantly different goals, both of these leaders are remarkably humble and resilient individuals who inspired a flock of followers on their rocky, yet successful, path toward fulfilling their visions.

There is no one-size-fits-all model of leadership as situations and contexts dictate which leadership style is appropriate. In business, Transformation Leadership has proven to be most effective, whereby emotionally intelligent leaders focus on the individual needs and personal development of their followers.¹¹ This leadership style has gained importance due to its significant impact on organizational outcomes since the mid-1980s.¹² ¹³
In order to excel as a leader in your area of expertise, you need to maintain an advanced level of area-specific knowledge and to cultivate relevant skills needed in order to thrive in your role. For example, a leader at a construction firm has a deep understanding of construction materials and repair tools, whereas a leader at a Software Development company has advanced computer skills.

Having a role model or a mentor is beneficial for developing leadership skills. A good mentor challenges your ideas, encourages you in times of difficulties, and provides you with advice and tips drawn from experience. Consider people in your current environment who could serve as mentors for you. While your academic supervisor is an obvious place to start, consider others as well, including peers whose leadership style is inspiring, and who would be willing to give you feedback.

As a prospective leader, working with a successful leader presents a tremendous opportunity to experience a follower’s perspective and to discover what character traits inspire you to follow and commit to that leader’s vision. Additionally, having been a follower once serves as a useful reminder for future leaders to remain humble and empathetic towards their followers.

### Quick Guide to Being a Leader

1. **Get involved** in activities that offer you the opportunity to lead others, whether on the job, or during your studies.

2. Concentrate on **building the right team** of competent and motivated individuals (the “who”) before setting out strategies or tactics (the “what”).

3. **Confront the true facts of a situation** no matter how brutal they may be. Your team will be motivated to act by facts which, when negative, will cultivate resilience and enthusiasm. Consider the following strategies:
   - In reflecting on a given situation, lead with questions (not answers) to get a clear picture of reality and its implications.
   - Engage in genuine dialogue and debate, not coercion.
   - Turn mistakes into a learning experience rather than pointing blame.
   - Build filtering mechanisms to discern essential facts from background noise.

4. **The Hedgehog Concept**: Avoid getting distracted into new fields where you lack the expertise by only pursuing the projects that:
   - Reflect your vision, core values (e.g., innovation), and purpose (e.g., to improve human health).
   - Try this group exercise to capture the core values and purpose of your team.
   - Allow you to leverage your strengths and core competencies and those of your team.
   - Drive profitability.

5. Build a well-defined operational system that **fosters discipline, freedom and responsibility** to eliminate the need for excessive control (e.g., hierarchy, bureaucracy). Consider recruiting self-disciplined and diligent individuals, leading a culture of ethical and professional conduct, and creating a “stop doing” lists to better focus on what is crucial for growth.
**Lead by example** to inspire success

- Take initiative and promote positive change. If you want your team to maintain a sustainable environment, get a recycle bin and use it!
- Develop your emotional intelligence to sharpen your interpersonal skills (e.g., be an active listener)
- Promote self-awareness among your team, starting with yourself: openly share your mistakes and vulnerabilities and be accountable for your actions. Demonstrate your strengths through your actions rather than words; you will earn the respect and the loyalty of your team.
- Mentor others and value their potential
- Be **equitable and inclusive**: make decisions impartially, state expectations, manage conflict, and give credit fairly
- Be willing to put the interests of your organization or team before personal greatness
- Use a range of leadership styles

**Taking Action**

**Professional Development & Training**

- **Workshops** - *McGill CL&E - Emerging Leadership Program*: This program is a suite of workshops that help students develop their leadership.
- **Workshops** - *McGill SKILLSETS Leadership Workshop Series*: This series aims to provide the general concept and an overview of the different skills that are crucial to leading successfully in management roles.
- **Courses** - *McGill School of Continuing Studies - Leadership Courses*: A variety of course selections to help students acquire the skills to be a successful leader. This includes part-time courses, summer courses, online courses, workshops and certificate program, with credit and non-credit options.
- **Courses** - *McGill Executive Institute - Leadership Programs*: Intensive programs designed for those who are moving into a leadership role or wish to refine the capabilities as a leader.
- **Courses** - *McGill Graduate Certificate in Educational Leadership Programs*: Offered by the Department of Integrated Studies in Education, these program address the needs of Quebec schools leaders and to those who wish to further their professional development in leadership.
- **Check** myInvolvement for upcoming workshops and programs under “Work with others: Leadership”

**Gaining Experience**

- **Volunteer to lead small initiatives in student clubs and local community organizations**: [Engage McGill](#) | [McGill Volunteering Opportunities](#)
- **Apply for the McGill Career Leadership Program** and take on the role of Career Leaders.
- **Apply for the McGill International Student Leadership Program** and grow your leadership skills in a culturally-diverse environment.
- **Find a mentor who holds a leadership role within his/her organization**: [Mentoring Across McGill](#)
- **Apply for the CEOx1Day program** to experience a day in the life of Canada’s top CEOs.
- **Apply for the Common Purpose Global Leader Experience** program to develop your leadership skills.
- **Try this Leadership group exercise** with your team where you practice: envisioning, aligning others toward the vision, and ensuring execution or implementation.
Resources

Websites

- **Student Leaders at McGill**: This site is a one-stop shop offering tools and program for students looking to be in leadership positions.
- **How-to Guides - Leopard Leadership Program - Stanford University**: Include resources about leading teams, communications skills and others.

Video Clips

- **Introverts and Leadership Series Part 1 and Part 2**: Delivered by Karl Moore, Professor of Strategy & Organization at McGill’s Faculty of Management.

Groups & Associations

- **Leadership Management International (LMI) Canada**: This organization helps leaders and organizations realize more of their potential.

Books, Articles & Reports

- **Collins, J. (2012). Good to great: Why some companies make the leap --and other’s don’t.** Place of publication not identified: Must Read Summaries: [http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/801415947](http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/801415947)
References

15. To Be a Good Leader, First Be a Good Follower. UNC Executive Development (2016).