

The Great Leaders Handbook

Leadership can take you from where you are to where you dream to be.

Great Leaders...

...insist on intelligent risk. The reasons are multiple. People usually perform best when there is something at stake and they are at least mildly stressed. (Risk is a source of stress.) There should be something to gain for exceptional performance. Forcing a team to play a higher level game and perform to higher than expected standards improves the team's ability to solve problems and work together.

...promote complexity. While not true for everyone, it is important to keep most people from being hypnotized by their work. Doing the same thing in the same way works fine for treatment protocols but the rest of the job should not be reduced to precise steps.

We realize we're on ambiguous ice so we will introduce the concept and let you figure it out. If you remove the need to think about a process, you are in danger of killing the habit of thinking at all. Or perhaps more crudely stated, if you make a job idiot-proof, you have no right to be surprised that only idiots will take the job.

...champion choice. Charles Coonradt, author of *The Game of Work* says that one element that makes playing games enjoyable is the introduction of choice. In most, if not all sporting activities, even when the rules are confining, there is still an element of choice, for example the stance you choose when making a free throw, the route you choose when returning a punt, the club you choose for the first drive out of the tee box.

In healthcare, choice could be deadly but sometimes it saves lives. Your task is to figure out under what circumstances choice will be encouraged. To encourage choice requires enormous confidence in the competence of your team. Have you got it?

...connect the work and worker. One advantage of being a first responder is that you work your home turf. Chances are when the tones sound, the address will be a familiar one and you might even know the patient or the patient will know you.

Case in point:

When the tones gave way to the dispassionate voice of the dispatcher, the message was clear...to me.

"Medic three, zone two first responders, respond to River Road at the rope swing east of the low water crossing. You have a male patient, breathing but unresponsive. Caller reports patient had seizures and fell, cutting his head. Caller reports they are unable to stop the bleeding."

I knew with certainty who and what I would find once on scene. I knew with near certainty the course of treatment and I could pretty much bet that in a few hours someone at the MiniMart would catch me and give me an update on his condition. In a day or two the patient would stop me on the street, thank me for patching him up...again...and promise to take it easy on the beer which for some reason puts him into seizure when he has more than a couple. In a little town, it's easy to see the results of your work.

HIPPA considered: Look for ways to tie the treatment and the caregiver to the patient and the results. Help me share in the healing I helped facilitate. Show me why my work matters.

...get an enemy. Every team needs an enemy and every enemy needs a name. In healthcare this is easy because you're always fighting something. And most of those somethings already have names. You're wrestling with cancer or trauma or obesity...those are all named enemies that don't need renaming. What they need is personifying and consistently referred to as the enemy, the bad guy, the dark side...however you choose to portray it so long as the team is able to relate to something that is tangible in addition to being real.

...present plenty of problems. Human beings are built to solve problems. We are at our best when we are at work on big problems.

Team leaders (a.k.a. bosses) are *not supposed to solve problems!* Solving problems for the team deprives them of the opportunity to feel they have contributed fully, robs the team members of the opportunity to grow, and steals valuable management time that could have been better spent mentoring or exploring new territories.

Problem solving is the job of the team. The leader's job is to be a problem giver not a problem solver. The leader is responsible for making certain that every team member is properly trained and equipped. Then and only then is it the leader's responsibility to make certain that everyone is working on solving problems appropriate to the ability of that individual.

There is nothing more beautiful, nothing more tea provoking than a team member leaving your office with a great big, fat, juicy problem...preferably a bunch of them!

...foster team intelligence. The popular saying is Together Each Achieves More. While that may be true, I believe that together each *knows* more. It doesn't make for a snappy acronym but it does make for powerful teams. Simply put, the more individuals know about each other personally or professionally, the more they will be capable of working as a team- not as buddies who get along with one another but as team members, capable of achieving more together.

...go first. Leadership is not about directing the way. It's about *leading* the way. And you can't lead from behind any more than you can follow someone from in front!

The oft unspoken goal of leadership is not followership but independence.

**The goal of leadership is to get the team
to do the right thing when the leader is not there.
The example set by the boss is the most powerful influence.**

When presented with an opportunity to act, team members aren't thinking about the organization or the patient. They are considering the consequences for themselves. And the biggest factor in the decision is often the example that has been set by the boss.

Like tracks in the snow, leadership by example tells the team, "Go ahead. Take a step in this direction. You can do it. I'll show you the way."

...carry the compass. The two most important things a leader must do are: 1) Assemble the team; and 2) Sell the dream. If you put together a strong enough team, they'll figure out how to use their collective talents to get the job done. Unless you sell the dream and set the course, they will select a course of their own which may or may not be the course you have in mind.