

Lesson Five: Practical Leadership Emphases, Skills and Tools

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A. Key Learning Points

1. Effective leaders invest in activities that align with the roles and goals they aspire to achieve.
2. Effective leaders balance their investment in developmental activities and operational activities.
3. Effective leaders ask good questions and listen well; they realize they learn little when they are talking.
4. Effective leaders know that some decisions require narrow executive authority and others require broad participation and consensus.
5. Effective leaders develop effective leaders to succeed them.

B. Real World Examples and Considerations for Practitioners

1. Effective leaders invest in activities that align with the roles and goals they aspire to achieve.

If you seek success in certain roles and responsibilities, you are well-advised to focus and succeed at the tasks and activities needed to excel in those roles and responsibilities.

Too often, however, our work and activities fail to align with our goals and aspirations. In most instances, we manage or are managed by lists of near-term tasks and activities with little conscious attention to the relationship between those near-term tasks and our longer term objectives.

Effective leaders appreciate the correlation between prioritized work and performance results. They begin with a clear definition of who they want to be and what they want to accomplish. And then they organize their tasks, activities, and investment of resources appropriately.

The table below shows how a leader organizes his weekly activities with emphasis on intermediate and long-term, relationship-based results.

Leadership Role	Weekly Priority/Tasks
Sales	Get and meet with at least 1 prospect referred from an existing customer 5 cold calls each day Lunch each day with current client or prospect
Profit/Earning	Identify 10 most profitable customers/accounts Develop a strategy/plan to increase sales to top 10 customers Manage use of cellular phone and increase utilization of personal pager Improve understanding of operations/distribution needed to support sales
Customer Satisfaction	Call each customer to confirm receipt of product and initial satisfaction with product Use tickle file/database of customers who may need to restock inventory
Career Growth	Continue to improve skills with Excel and Gold Mine software Read the Wall Street Journal daily Explore executive MBA programs
Personal Wellness	30 minute walk/jog daily Stretch before breakfast
Family	Eat dinner at home with family Monday, Wednesday, Friday 30 minutes each night playing/learning with children
Leisure/Recreation	Hit golf balls at least once a week Go to movies, sports game, or concert with wife at least once each week 60 minutes gardening/landscaping each weekend

Stephen Covey explains this approach in greater detail both in the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and in *First Things First*.

2. Effective leaders balance their investment in developmental activities and operational activities.

We all must manage an appropriate balance between taking care of short term operations and developing longer term business.

Because there are few developmental activities that absolutely must be accomplished today and because there is rarely any immediate income associated with longer term developmental activities, it is not surprising that we tend to focus most of our energy and resources on time-certain, near-term operational tasks that must be completed and that do produce immediate revenues. It's quite possible, however, that we can manage day-to-day operations effectively and profitably and find ourselves out-of-business in the longer term.

At the very least, effective leaders distinguish between developmental and operational activities and to maintain a conscious, appropriate balance among them. The table below shows how one leader made and managed this distinction with positive leadership results.

Leadership/Developmental Priorities	Management/Operational Priorities
New product design/engineering Marketing and sales to new markets/accounts Selection and introduction of new information system/technology Succession planning – mentoring/coaching future vice presidents	Revenues current business quarter Costs of poor quality, defects, returns, rework, warranty current business quarter Employee safety and productivity current business quarter Budget variance Cash flow

In *7 Habits* and *First Things First*, Stephen Covey introduces a time management/leadership matrix that distinguishes between activities that are urgent and those that are not urgent but significant for longer-term success.

The table below shows how one executive used a Quadrant II matrix to clarify, organize, and improve his personal effectiveness. This matrix emphasizes activities in Quadrant II that are not urgent but important. Successful investment in Quadrant II developmental activities tends to decrease the number and frequency of urgent immediate operational problems that surface in Quadrant I. Quadrants III and IV are important for health and fun – but they also suggest non-value added activities that might be managed better or eliminated altogether.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	I. Complaint from our best customer Employee injury Backlog of orders Defective batch of raw materials Price/discount for sales proposal due today Temporary clerical help Crashed manufacturing info system Wife needs a ride to the airport Some mail Some e-mail Some voice mail	II. Improve initial product quality Improve ability to deliver products accurately and on-time Strengthen supplier relationships/quality Clarify distribution channels and pricing structure to assure equity, consistency Align HR plan with overall strategy/plan Justify investment in upgrade of info system Collaborate/communicate with wife to schedule her travel at times when its easier to assist or accompany her
Not Important	III. Most unscheduled meetings Many phone calls, e-mails, and US mail Some walk-ins A whining, unproductive employee A lot of fun things that make people laugh and make the company a good place to work	IV. Meeting with sales people trying to sell me stuff I don't want or need Remodeling/refurnishing my office Learning a new word processing software application Trying to recover a lost account that never made us any money to begin with

3. Effective leaders ask good questions and listen well; they realize they learn little when they are talking.

We rarely learn much when we are speaking. Although our words and speech help us clarify what we know and believe, they do not tend to build new knowledge, understanding, or creativity.

Effective leaders know what they know; they are most interested in learning and leveraging what they don't already know. They accomplish this by asking good questions and listening actively to their colleagues, employees' and customers' answers.

When I was growing up, I remember my dad asking me about my day at school. Where other dads seemed concerned about test scores and grades, my dad liked to ask, "What good questions did you ask today?" He was more interested in how I thought and imagined and reasoned and questioned than about what I knew. He also realized I'd know more when I asked good questions rather than learned subjects by drill or memorization.

I know a CEO who is famous among his employees for asking, "What have you learned lately that makes us more profitable?" Not surprisingly, this CEO has used this question to raise awareness and understanding of business profitability among his entire work force.

I know another CEO who asks, "Where have you shopped lately that ought to be selling our product?" This CEO uses this question to raise employee awareness and strengthen business activities for product sales and marketing.

At Motorola, the first agenda item for senior leadership attention is quality. As Motorola discovered in the early 1980's when it's product quality was poor – there will be no earnings where product quality is questionable.

If you want to get smarter, faster, -- ask better questions and listen more than you talk.

4. Effective leaders know that some decisions require narrow executive authority and others require broad participation and consensus.

Effective leaders recognize the importance of diverse decision-making approaches and styles. They select the decision-making approach best suited to the business challenge or problem. At Harley Davidson, they use the four explicit decision making approaches summarized in the table below.

Type of Decision	Characteristics of Decision- making style
I am king.	The strongest, most executive decision making style. Used when responsibility, accountability, and power is clear, significant, and valuable when used explicitly and constructively. Also valuable when a decision maker has unique experience and/or expertise that informs the decision.
I am still king.	A strong, executive decision making style that encourages comment or input without consensus. Creates benefits of participation and collaboration without the challenge or burden or accountability of consensual/democratic decision making.
We are all in this together.	A truly collaborative decision making style that emphasizes participation and input based on merit of one's ideas and perspective. Tends to increase decision makers ownership and accountability for the decision.
You decide.	A decision making style that delegates authority and responsibility entirely. Tends to build leadership and accountability at the line level with positive results when chosen appropriately.

You might consider how the Harley Davidson decision making styles could apply in a family situation.

It's also important that all parties understand, in advance, what type of decision making style is being used for a given decision.

5. Effective leaders develop effective leaders to succeed them.

Early in this course, we defined leadership as leaving a place or situation significantly better than one found it.

The moment and method that a leader uses to leave an organization or situation is one of his/her last and most significant leadership opportunities and decisions.

A leaders' departure can be powerful symbolically. At its best, a leaders' departure marks the end of a significant period of history and the beginning of another.

The leader's decision to leave represents a choice to pursue new leadership interests and opportunities.

The leaders' ability to leave his/her indelible imprint on an organization after (s)he has departed is a hallmark of truly effective leadership. This requires succession planning which emphasizes coaching, mentoring, and challenging other leaders in the organization to assume ever-increasing levels of responsibility and opportunity.

A parent understands the leadership responsibility and challenge of raising a child as a leader. A business leader, likewise, does the same with his colleagues and employees.

Who do you work with who is most able and interested in sustaining and building on your leadership successes once you are gone? How are you preparing them to realize their greatest potential for leadership?

How will your organization be irrevocably different and better because you were a leader there?

- C. Recommended Reading Assignment & Highlights – All selections are from Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*. (Fireside)

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

Habit 7 is Preserving and enhancing the greatest asset you have – you. It’s renewing the four dimensions of your nature – physical, spiritual, mental, and social/emotional.

The physical dimension involves caring effectively for our physical body – eating the right kinds of foods, getting sufficient rest and relaxation, and exercising on a regular basis.

Renewing the spiritual dimension provides leadership to your life ... the spiritual dimension is your core, your center, your commitment to your value system.

Most of our mental development and study discipline comes through formal education. But as soon as we leave the external discipline of school, many of us let our minds atrophy. We don’t do any more serious reading, we don’t explore new subjects in any depth outside our action fields, we don’t think analytically, we don’t write – at least critically or in any way that tests our ability to express ourselves in distilled, clear, and concise language. Instead, we spend out time watching TV.

Education – continuing education, continually honing and expanding the mind – is vital to renewal.

Renewal is the principle – and the process – that empowers us to move on an upward spiral of growth and change, of continuous improvement Moving along the upward spiral requires us to learn, commit, and do on increasingly higher planes.

- D. Additional Resources and Links to Others Sources

Warren Bennis & Robert Townsend, *Reinventing Leadership: Strategies to Empower the Organization*. (Quill)

John Gardner, *On Leadership*. (Free Press)

John Kotter, *Leading Change*. (Harvard Business School Press)

Terry L. Paulson, *They Shoot Managers Don’t They: Managing Yourself and Leading Others in a Changing World*. (Ten Speed Press)

- E. Question(s) for Reflection and Discussion

1. What is the most significant concept or principle you would most want to teach someone else about leadership? Give an example.
2. How do you plan to apply what you have learned in this course to your professional or personal life? Give an example.