

# ***16 LEADERSHIP SECRETS NEW SUPERVISORS NEED FOR IMMEDIATE SUCCESS ON THE JOB***



A “cheat sheet” for *starting strong* as a new leader

**First published in the United States of America in 2014**

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**First Edition**

***16 Leadership Secrets New Supervisors Need for Immediate Success on the Job:  
A cheat sheet for starting strong as a new leader***

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## Unlocking the Secrets of Success as a New Leader

I don't know too many people who wake up every day wanting to be a colossal failure, do you?

So why is it that so many new leaders fail (up to 50% of them, according to some studies)?

What it boils down to is that for you, as a new leader, to be effective, you must get up to speed quickly. This means learning the ropes fast, building your credibility quickly, and delivering results from the get go.

The following leadership secrets will help you do just that.

## Leadership Secret #1: To Power Your Leadership, Know Why You Want to Lead

Sometimes you choose leadership and sometimes it chooses you.

Either way, it's important to understand your motivation to lead so that you can be absolutely clear on *why* you want to lead. After all, you're going to be putting into the job all of your talents, skills, intelligence (cognitive and emotional), personality, and energy.

It's usually best if you want to be a leader. If you're not motivated to be a leader, chances are that you'll struggle in some way. It doesn't mean that you won't grow to like leading, but it does mean that you'll have to invest additional energy to do the job well.

In order to discover your motivation to lead, answer the following questions:

1. What are my primary motivators?
2. How do those motivators fit with my leadership role?
3. How strong is my desire to be a leader?
4. What are my reasons for wanting to be a leader?

Once you answer these questions, write down in one sentence why you want to be a leader. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. To make a positive difference on a broader level
2. To mobilize people toward a vision or overcome a challenge
3. To organize people for the accomplishment of goals and tasks
4. To right a wrong or solve a tough problem
5. To provide focus and purpose
6. To teach others to be better than they were the day before
7. To embody and enact the collective aspirations of others
8. Because you are good at it
9. To have the power, control, and influence that goes with it
10. To move up in your career

Once you've crystallized your motivation to lead, you know why you're in the game in the first place and can use this as a source of reliable energy to power your leadership.

## Leadership Secret #2: Put Your Leadership on Solid Ground by Establishing Your Own Definition of Leadership

It is possible to lead without having ever thought about what the word leadership means to you. In fact, I'd say the majority of leaders haven't given much thought to it.

To complicate matters, there is no agreed upon definition of leadership. In fact, one study used ninety (!) different variables to come up with a definition of leadership. It takes up the better part of a whole page.

Here are a few other definitions:

“The action of leading a group of people or an organization” – Oxford English Dictionary

“The process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” – Gary Yukl

“The art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations” – Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner

“A process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task” – Martin Chemers

Having your own definition of leadership is not only basic, but you're a leader so you ought to have a pretty good idea of what leadership means to you.

So, take a few seconds and ask yourself: what is leadership?

What did you come up with?

Here are a few thoughts I have.

Leadership:

- Is a process
- Involves influencing others
- Happens with the context of a group
- Is goal oriented
- Is based on shared goals

What leadership is NOT:

- About your ego
- A set of inborn characteristics or traits
- A right to which you are entitled
- About making you the center of the universe

In order to come up with your own definition, you can adopt someone else's or can create your own. To give you a start on putting together your own, answer the following questions:

- What are the key elements of leadership?
- What are the most important aspects of leadership for me?

Once you've answered these questions, write down your definition, and you're off and running.

Getting clear on your definition will help you understand and keep you focused your role as a leader rather than being bounced around on the waves of fad or opinion.

## Leadership Secret #3: Establish and Follow Your Rules of Leadership

The next step is to define your rules of leadership—the underlying model you use to lead. This is important because it gives you the “what” and the “how” of the way you lead as opposed to leading by the seat of your pants or “instinct.”

Your rules of leadership are based on why you want to lead and your definition of leadership. They can also be based on your experience leading or being led or from education and training on leadership.

For example, Colin Powell had his “13 Rules to Live By,” Donald Rumsfeld was famous for his “Rumsfeld’s Rules,” and John Wooden had his “Rules to Lead By.”

These lists were essentially a distillation of their unique leadership philosophies.

As a young Air Force officer, I always found these types of lists useful, but it wasn’t until later than I was finally able to formulate my own distinct approach.

Now it’s time for you to come up with yours. The great thing is that there are so many different leadership approaches out there in terms of the academic research, the examples you see of good (and bad) leadership, and your own personal experience that you should be able to develop a few principles of your own that work for you without too much trouble.

As my leadership philosophy developed, I relied less on examples of leadership and more on proven academic research that matched my own personal experience. Your philosophy will develop over time too.

Here is an approach you can use to pull together your own rules of leadership. You can pick a leader you admire and want to emulate. This is a time-tested approach, but there is one caveat: human beings are fallible so no one you pick will be the perfect exemplar. Another way is to pick a good model or models. There has been lots of study on leadership, especially over the past 100 years. So there are many different models, although some are better than others. A partial list of good models includes:

- Servant Leadership, Robert Greenleaf
- Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX)
- Transformational Leadership, James MacGregor Burns
- Level-5 Leadership, James Collins
- Strengths-Based Leadership, Dr. Martin Seligman et al
- Flexible Leadership, Gary Yukl
- Three Levels of Leadership, James Scouller



Once you've selected leaders or models to use, ask yourself the following questions:

- What is your current leadership philosophy?
- How did it develop?
- What are the most important elements of your philosophy?
- How well does your leadership philosophy match with your current role?
- What are some things you can do to improve upon your leadership model?

Use your answers to put together your own list of leadership rules to guide you as you lead each day.

## Leadership Secret #4: What to Do on Your First Day as a Leader

You've been waiting for this day for a long time.

You're nervous, but at the same time excited.

Will I do a good job?

Will my people like me?

Will I get along with my boss?

What is it going to be like?

Questions like these are perfectly normal. And get this: every time you find yourself in a new leadership position, you'll ask many of these same questions.

Therefore, it's worthwhile to think about how you might go about answering them and getting off to a good start in your new leadership position.

I recall my first opportunity to lead as a young Second Lieutenant in Germany. My boss had been sent off to a course back in the States for several months, so yours truly flighted up as section chief of a shop that totaled four airmen...well, now three, including myself and two crusty Master Sergeants.

With all sincerity, on my first day as the new 'boss' I sought to take charge and get things rolling. I called a mandatory meeting at which I proceeded to lay out "Scherrer's Leadership Policy."

About halfway through, one of the Master Sergeants who went by O.B. said, "Lieutenant, who are you talking to?"

"What?" His question hadn't quite registered.

"We know you mean well, but D and I have been around the block a few times. I think we got this. Don't worry, we'll keep you out of trouble."

Ah, message received.

I made a classic rookie mistake by thinking that I needed to immediately assert my authority so that everyone knew "who was in charge around here."

The better thing to do would have been to take the time to listen to these two seasoned experts, get to know them a little better, tell them about me, and ask what they thought we needed to do to keep the shop running well while our actual boss was gone.

And in a nutshell, that's what I'd advise you to do your first day on the job:

1. Tell people who you are, including a little about your family and your hobbies.
2. Make every effort to walk around and meet as many people as possible.
3. Don't ask too many questions.
4. Listen to them carefully.
5. Seek to understand what they think is needed to get the job done well.

Not only will you learn a whole lot more, but your people will appreciate the genuine gesture of interest and signal that you might be just a little bit different as a leader.

Maybe someone they just might be able to trust.

Maybe someone they'll even like.

Someone they might be able to work for.

## Leadership Secret #5: Make Your First Meeting Count

The curtain is about to raise for you to go on stage for the first act in the play called, “I AM THE BOSS (what do I do now?)“

It’s your FIRST MEETING.

Along with conducting yourself well on your first day on the job (see #4), your first meeting with your team is a crucial event to get you started off on the right foot.

The first thing you have to remember is that the meeting is not for you, it’s for the people in your organization. Much like the questions you had, they are going to have questions on their mind as well, such as:

- Who is this person?
- Is this someone I will be able to get along with?
- Is this someone I can work for?
- Where does s/he want to take us?

So, your job in that first meeting is to give some answers to those questions.

I’ve done this a number of ways over the years to include mass meetings of the entire organization, several smaller meetings over time, and a separate meeting with my key leadership team. What you do will depend on the size of your organization, your sense of urgency, and your intent.

A good friend of mine once took over an Air Force wing. His first day on the job, he held a commander’s call (basically a big meeting of all Airmen in the organization), a key leadership meeting, and one-on-one’s with key leaders. To top it all off, he challenged everyone to run with him around the flight line and whoever beat him would get a 2-day pass (two days off).

Only two brave souls—outstanding runners—took him up on it. Long story short, he smoked their butts. Trust me, word of that run spread quickly throughout the wing. It also gave everyone a great idea of the kind of boss they had (by the way, he’s since been promoted to General).

This particular boss wanted to make a big impression right away. Your mileage may vary.

At any rate, you need to make your first meeting count.

Here are some things you should think about:

- Figure out when and where you want to hold your meeting. Depending on what you want to do, you might need to make sure you have presentation equipment and seating. Or you may want to do something totally different to shake things up right off the bat. Think Pope Francis not moving in to the Papal apartments.
- Determine whom you want to invite. Your entire organization? Direct reports only? Customers?
- Most importantly, answer the questions you know people are asking:
- Who is this? Tell a little about yourself, where you came from, your family, and your hobbies. Follow this up with your leadership philosophy (see #3) and any relevant first impressions you have. Try to make these comments positive.
- Is this someone I will be able to get along with? People will be making judgments about you from the get go. So you might as well be as genuine and authentic as you can. Some will make instant judgments; some will take a wait and see approach. However, this is your chance to show them who you really are.
- Where is s/he going to take us? Maybe you've been brought in to fix something or maybe things are running on autopilot. Regardless, people want to know where you are going to lead them. It's important to sketch just a little about what that future looks like to you?
- Is this someone I can work for? In the final analysis, people want to work for a good boss. They want to know that their boss will back them up and listen to them. You started the listening part in #4, and with your first meeting your people will start to get an idea whether or not they'll be able to work for you—and maybe even enjoy it.
- Once you go through these questions, then—and only then—start putting your words and/or presentation together. You want to have a crystal clear idea of what you need to say and how you say it.

Finally, practice your delivery. This is your one time to get this right—don't waste it!

## Leadership Secret #6: Earning—and Keeping—the Trust of Your People

Trust is a big deal.

So big, in fact, that without it, you're almost guaranteed to fail as a leader at some point.

As leadership guru Warren Bennis put it, "Leadership without mutual trust is a contradiction in terms."

What is trust exactly? According to Stephen M. R. Covey, trust is interpersonal confidence comprised of two dimensions: character and competence.

Character includes your integrity, motive, and intent as you interact with people.

Competence includes your capabilities, skills, results, and track record.

There's also a third dimension: loyalty. Loyalty is supporting your people by giving them what they need to get the job done, communicating with them honestly and truthfully, and sticking by them when things get tough.

How do you build trust?

Gaining trust is not something that happens overnight. Gaining trust occurs through the day-to-day actions that demonstrate your character, competence, and loyalty.

And you know, some people might not ever get to the point where they trust you. What I'd say is that's just fine as long as you're consistent in your words and actions. At least there will be no doubt about who you are and what you stand for.

Honestly, when I first started in the Air Force, it took me a while to figure this whole trust thing out. There were a few problems I had initially:

1. I wanted to do everything myself. Although not intentional, what this meant to the people around me was that I didn't trust them to do their job even though they were fully capable and trained to do it.
2. I was quick to write off people who didn't deliver results when I expected. Sometimes people were late with their work or just never delivered. Other times people said they were going to do something then didn't. At first, I'd write them off immediately and refuse to listen to excuses or try to understand what else might have been going on. Later, I understood that I had to sort through truth and myth and take a more open-minded approach. High expectations are one thing, but being unreasonable is quite another.

Quite frankly, there were some times when my expectations might have been unreasonable or I discovered that people had every intention of being responsive, but they had other genuine priorities that they were trying to juggle.

3. Related to the above, I used to flush people if they failed to live up to my high standards of behavior. When that happened, my trust in them went to zero. Here's what I found out quickly though—virtually no one could live up to my high standards of behavior, not even me! Now, don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with having high standards, but it is also important to have a little mercy in your approach.

Once I grew in understanding, I was able to generate much more mutual trust which was in turn followed by performance and results.

As you take on this fundamental task of gaining and maintaining trust, here are some things you can do to build trust:

1. Keep your promises.
2. Be willing to help.
3. Treat people with respect.
4. Don't shoot the messenger.
5. Make truth the foundation of your communication.
6. If your people stumble or they struggle, pick them up.

There are hundreds of other ways to build trust, and your way of doing it will be unique to you.

The important thing is to make it an uncompromising part of how you conduct yourself as a leader.

## Leadership Secret #7: Getting Oriented--Figuring Out Who's Who and What's What

Your first 90 days on the job as a leader are going to set the tone for your initial tenure as a leader. At first, you will have enough to do to figure out where to park, how to find your office, get your computer set-up, and get your HR paperwork squared away.

That's all well and good, but at the same time you need to start digging in and get rolling in your new position.

Toward this end, you need to start orienting yourself to your boss's priorities and those of your department and organization. Go find the last shareholders report and read it. Read the strategic plan if there is one (if there's not, that's a whole other lesson we'll have to get into later). Review the last four quarter's results.

What you're trying to do is get an idea of where you and your team fits into the big picture and what you all contribute to making the organization successful.

You also need to start assessing whom the movers and shakers are. Movers actually get things done. Shakers instigate others to get things done. Some people are both. Start figuring out what they're all about. Can you trust them? Why or why not? What motivates them? What are they responsible for? How do you contribute to their success? And they to yours?

These same questions apply to your team. Schedule a round of meetings with your direct reports. Start figuring out what makes them tick, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and what they are accountable for.

I guarantee that there will be a crisis or two that pops up that you have to deal with during this orientation period. In addition, people will come by to shop their pet projects to you to get approval. Sometimes, you'll get pressure to make a decision or reverse one that your predecessor made. Tread carefully until you get all the facts.

Case in point: when I was assigned as the "city manager" for an Air Force base, I was called in to a meeting with the Vice Commander and the CIO, who promptly proceeded to lean on me to cough up a dozen of my people to give to the CIO in support of a network consolidation project. Needless to say, the sirens went off in my head and I calmly asked for more time to evaluate the situation.

You need to do the same: make the decision if it needs to be made, but don't be afraid to do your due diligence as well. After all, you'll have to live with the consequences.



I've heard some people recommend not making any major changes when you first come on board. While I used that advice in principle, I also held that if something needed to be fixed right away, I went ahead and did it, especially if an organization was in crisis. There's not a lot of time to deliberate in these situations.

In sum: hit the ground running and work hard to sort out who's who in the zoo. The sooner you do that, the better off you'll be.

## Leadership Secret #8: Be a Courageous Delegator

One of the most important skills you need to build as a new leader is the ability to delegate: how to delegate, when to delegate, and to whom to delegate.

Before you had direct reports, you did the work you were assigned work and did it well. You probably didn't have to ask for much help. If you were on a team, you did your part to contribute to the team's success, given your role and responsibilities.

The key difference between then and now is that you won't be able to do everything on your own. You not only have to manage yourself, but you're accountable for the results of those who work for you. You need to make sure they have what they need to do the best job they possibly can.

The bottom line is this: if you don't delegate, you won't do as well as you could do, and you'll increase your chances of failure.

All this said, there is an art to delegation. You have to know the skills, abilities, and tendencies of your people in more than just a superficial way. Do they have the skills to do the job? If they don't it's not wise to blindly delegate. On the other hand, what indicates to you that they are competent?

Another question to ask is how confident they are. Confidence can be related to competence, or at least a tendency toward competence.

Have you provided your team the resources they need? If you don't, you can delegate all day, but you won't get what you need in terms of productivity or performance.

Let's say your answers to the above questions are yes. Here are a few ideas on how to delegate:

1. Bring your people in on the decision of what to delegate.
2. Make sure you clearly and completely communicate the task and what's expected. Be specific.
3. Get a head nod that they are clear on the task that has been given to them.
4. Decide how much follow-up you will need to do. As the boss, you have a right to get progress reports, but there's a fine balance between getting updated and getting too involved in the task you have delegated—no one likes a micromanager.
5. Delegate as far down the chain as you can stand. When you delegate, no-kidding give your people the responsibility to do the job along with the resources needed.
6. Support your people. If they do well, tell them. If they struggle, don't criticize, pick them up and help them. Coach them through the challenges, and let them propose solutions.
7. Make delegation a habit. Do it in good times and bad, when the workload is light or it's heavy.

8. Teach your direct reports to delegate if they have direct reports of their own.

So, there is more to delegation than meets the eye. Make sure you know your people and their capabilities, that you're crystal clear about the task, and that you trust and support your people.

## Leadership Secret #9: Tracking and Follow-Up

Let's say you've taken the advice contained in lesson #8 to heart and are now delegating with confidence.

The good news is you've taken a huge step forward as a new leader.

The bad news is that you're still not out of the woods.

Remember: you can delegate responsibility, not accountability. When push comes to shove, you're the one on the hook for results.

So just because you delegate, doesn't mean you can wash your hands of everything. A pitfall that many leaders fall into is that they fail to track and follow-up to ensure work is completed in a timely and quality fashion.

The key here is to put in place a reliable system that allows you to keep track of progress, provide vector checks to your people, and stay on top of everything for which you are accountable.

Sure, there are some things that you may be able to let go on autopilot. Maybe some of your people are true "fire and forget" weapons who can be counted on time and time again to deliver without any follow-up (NOTE: these types of people are very rare). More likely there are going to be a fair number of your people who aren't very organized, and who get overwhelmed and who take their eye off the ball.

Despite these challenges, you need to find a way to track and follow-up. If you have a sharp secretary, executive assistant, or a chief of staff, consider yourself lucky. Most times, it will be just you.

So what can you do? Here are a few tips to get you started:

1. First and foremost, document what you've tasked out, who's responsible for it, and when it's due.
2. Make an assessment of how challenging/simple the work it to provide an estimate of the timeline.
3. Talk to your people to get a good agreement of the time they need to complete the task.
4. Log the task into Outlook, Evernote, a day planner, or notebook. Whatever is comfortable for you. The point is to document it.
5. Set up a regularly recurring schedule to go over your task list. This includes a daily check and a structured way of follow-up with your team—a weekly meeting can cover this.
6. Make adjustments as things change...and make sure to document those changes.
7. If you're really smart, you can ask your employees to provide updates to a shared site like Sharepoint.

8. Although I never liked doing them, a weekly activity report is also a good tool for getting updates.

Ultimately, YOU are the one accountable for producing results. Following-up is essential to following through.

## Leadership Secret #10: Delivering Bad News

“Bad news doesn’t get better with time” was one of my key leadership tenets, especially when I was serving as a commander of a unit.

The consequences of not giving the bad news escalate the longer it’s held back. Withholding or delaying bad news can lead to negative production impacts, safety issues, drops in customer service, and financial losses, among many others.

The challenge is that it’s hard to be the one who has to deliver the bad news.

Nevertheless, as a leader, this comes with the territory.

What you don’t want to have is a leadership climate where people are even more reluctant than they already are to deliver bad news. From a leadership standpoint, it’s really important to have a policy of open communication.

As the commander of five different Air Force units, I really worked hard establish this type of climate. If you don’t do this, there really is no hope of getting the information you need—especially the bad news.

This policy of open communication had several benefits:

- First, it was a way of recognizing that things would not always go well, even though the intention was always to do our best.
- Second, when things did go wrong, I wanted to set up an environment wherein people were not scared to bring me bad news. I explained that only by bringing it up would we be able to put our collective minds together and deal with the situation whatever it was.
- Third, I wanted to set the expectation that telling the truth was always a good course of action along with accepting accountability. Stepping up and telling your boss that something went wrong is not any easy thing to do. It involves risk and apprehension.
- Fourth, I wanted to instill a climate of trust within the unit, that I had the backs of the Airmen even if something didn’t go quite right. With open communication that engendered a sense of trust, we’d be able to get through anything.

To mitigate the natural reluctance for bringing the boss the bad news, I always made a promise not to bite someone’s head off or shoot the messenger in the process. Most times, I did pretty well with this promise.

On the other hand, there were many times when I had to deliver bad news to bosses who were not so generous with their understanding. In fact, you could expect a pretty thorough ass-chewing right off the bat. Some were deserved, some not. Nonetheless, the right thing to do was always to deliver that news.

After a few of these, however, I developed a few tactics that served me well on many occasions.

- The Direct Approach. The direct approach states the bad news up front. Use this approach when the news is not particularly damaging or does not significantly impact the receiver, when the bad news may be ignored, when the culture endorses this approach, and when you must communicate a sense of resoluteness and determination.
- The Indirect Approach: With the direct approach, the bad news has more potential to upset the receiver or provoke a hostile reaction, is unexpected, or threatens a key relationship. In this case, the news is better communicated by first “preparing the battlespace” and creating a buffer that eases the impact of the news while still communicating it.
- The first key is to understand your audience. What makes them tick? What’s important to them? What language resonates with them?

Next construct your message with the following elements in mind:

- Start with the best news.
- If possible, work in some complimentary language about the receiver or audience.
- Establish a common frame of reference that you can both agree on.
- The first three steps constitute the buffer. Only at this point do you present the facts of the situation.
- If warranted, follow this up with an apology and a sketch of how you propose to move forward and deal with the situation. In other words, don’t hand off a problem without a solution.

Whether you take the direct or indirect approach, the next steps are to plan your message, rehearse, and then select the time, place, and method of delivery. Invest time and effort in these last few steps because they will largely determine your success in delivering the bad news.

Also, even if it’s tough delivering bad news to your boss, make sure it’s not so hard for the people who work for you.

## Leadership Secret #11: Avoid Rookie Mistakes

I get it, you're excited to finally take charge. You're excited, raring to go, to DO SOMETHING and get the job done. But in the back of your mind, there's probably just a little bit of hesitation...maybe even a little fear.

What if I make a mistake?

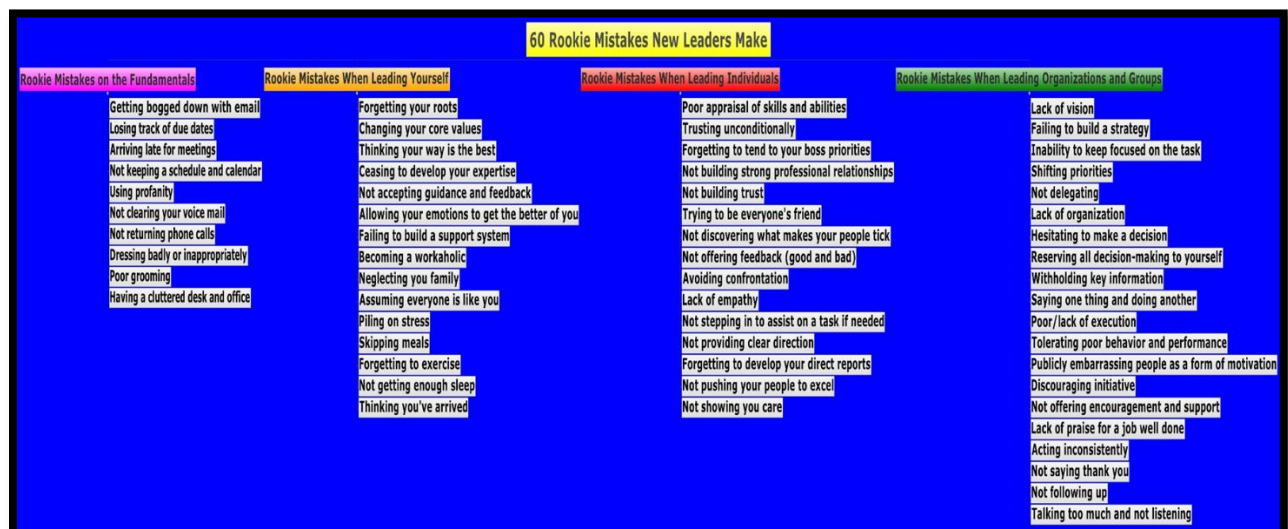
What if I screw this up royally?

What if I make a bad decision?

All of these thoughts are natural, but the reality is that as a new leader you WILL make mistakes. The challenge is to minimize them or—even better—avoid them in the first place.

In this spirit, I put together a straightforward mind map that lists 60 “rookie mistakes” new leaders make (and that you can avoid). What was interesting was that as I was working on the mind map, I realized it's not only rookie leaders that make these kinds of mistakes, ALL leaders are vulnerable to them no matter how many years you have under your belt.

This thing is, for experienced leaders, making these kinds of mistakes have much more far reaching consequences organizationally, professionally, and personally. Use this mind map as a reminder to yourself of what NOT to do as a new leader.





## Leadership Secret #12: Making Good Things Happen--Producing Results

Let's assume for a second that you were selected for that leadership position because 1) you showed aptitude and 2) you wanted it.

Given this, it stands to reason that you're probably interested in doing a good job and actually producing the results you were hired on to get.

Let's also say you've progressed past the "newbie" stage and you've gotten to know your boss and your team. You have a handle on your priorities and you're feeling at least somewhat comfortable in the role.

One thing you know by now is that your old mantra of "if it is to be, it's up to me" no longer holds true because there's no possible way you'll be able to get anything done by yourself. In fact, the only way you're able to produce results is with and through your people.

That's the first and most fundamental lesson of producing results as a leader: you do it through others.

It follows that your people will be more likely to produce those results if they trust you, they have confidence in you, they know you care about them, and they know where you want to take them.

In other words, producing results is not just a skills and competencies game, it's a relationship game.

That's the second lesson of producing results: work on having strong relationships to the point where you and your people know each other well and that you're able to recover quickly from the inevitable conflicts and irritations that occur when any group of people get together.

Provided the relationships between you and your team are solid, you can then put your budding time management and delegation skills to work to keep everything on track. Depending on how complex the task is, you might even want to think about adding project management skills to your leadership tool kit.

That's the third lesson and where leadership starts to blend with management: keep things moving forward smartly.

"Smartly" is the ideal though. Perhaps a better way to look at it is "as efficiently as you can." The reason is that you'll be faced with a stream of challenges, obstacles and issues to deal with that threaten to get in the way of progress.

In short, stuff happens: deadlines are missed, people change their minds, plans don't work out, changes are made, people argue, etc., etc.

This is where you'll need to bring in your problem solving, negotiation, communication, conflict resolution, and relationship skills to bear to lead your way through all the "stuff."

When you find yourself in this type of situation—let's call it a leadership crucible—you'll be in the natural element of leaders everywhere: tough, demanding, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.

This is where every aspect of who you are as a leader is tested and where every ounce of your virtuosity in the art of leadership is required.

This is the fourth lesson: you need to keep your head on straight and in the game so that you can maintain proper perspective and lead well through all the "stuff" that happens along the way toward producing results.

The fifth lesson is this: thank your people for what they do. Tell them you appreciate them.

Because you won't be successful without them.

## Leadership Secret #13: Know the Power You Have and Use it Wisely

If you're a leader, you have power.

Now the trick is to use it well.

Power is not just about the position you have, your legitimate power. In fact, if you strictly rely on the power that comes with your position, I'll wager you won't be very effective. Especially as a new leader, you will have some, but not a ton, of juice that comes with your position.

You'll be even less effective if you revel in your coercive power and rule by fear. I've had my share of those types of leaders over the years. No fun to work for and challenging to keep yourself motivated to keep producing at a high level.

The power that comes with your expertise is very necessary, but not sufficient to make you successful. Let me be clear, though: you have to know your stuff, and it's important that your people know you've got the right tools to do the job. You'll never know it all, but that shouldn't stop you from learning all you can even (especially) as you progress in your leadership career. This includes reading, training courses, and advanced education.

Where you really start to gain traction is when you employ your reward, referent, information, and connection power.

- Your reward power is based on your ability to bestow rewards. This goes beyond things like bonuses and employee of the month programs. I've found that informal rewards, even lighthearted awards, are often as meaningful. When I was stationed in Nebraska—corn country—I used to give out a can of corn that I called the "Cream of the Crop Award for Excellence." I gave it to people who did a good job, but who didn't get the recognition that some other did. Yes, it was corny, but it worked too.
- Referent power refers to your personality. Guess what? Personality matters. If you're hard to get along with, lack empathy, have a hard time listening, or you're always right, leadership is going to be a hard road for you. On the other hand, if you're easy to get along with, likable, and genuine, you'll have an edge as a leader.

Your access to and use of information is also a key to leadership power. Increasing your information power gives you the ability to make faster, better, and smarter decisions and do it in a way that gives you an advantage. It's important to have relationships with people who have access to vital information and to tap into information flows that can supply you with critical information.

In my view, the most important component of your leadership power comes from your relationships. As the old adage goes, “It’s not only what you know, it’s who you know.” The rise of social networks is a sterling example of how being connected can work for you. Networking, in the sense of growing mutually supportive relationships, is really the heart of increasing your connection power. As you network and build relationships make a point to connect with people who “score high” in terms of their formal, reward, expert, referent, informational, and connection power. By connecting with powerful people, you have the opportunity to benefit from their power by proxy and therefore increase your own.

Power is part and parcel of leadership. Remember that with power comes responsibility: lead with integrity and ethics and use your power well.

## Leadership Secret #14: How to Beat Procrastination. Stop Procrastinating and Start Getting Things Done

If only it were that easy.

How many times have you surfed the net instead of reviewing that financial report?

or hit the snooze button more than once on your alarm clock?

or put off that big project because of the resistance you might encounter?

The word procrastination comes from Latin: *Pro*, "in favor of", and *cras*, "tomorrow." This is a pretty good description of procrastination--putting off what ought to be done now until some future date.

The irony of procrastination is that most people think it's harmful, but nonetheless do it anyway for various kinds of short-term payoffs.

Procrastination does no one any good, whether you do it or your people do it. When people procrastinate, opportunities are lost, deadlines are missed, preparation is incomplete, performance sinks, and revenues drop.

So if procrastination has such negative effects, why continue to do it?

According to research, there are five main predictors of procrastination:

1. Task Aversion: if you don't like a particular task or it's unpleasant, your tendency to procrastinate increases.
2. Task Delay. The longer you delay the start of a task, the less important it seems to become unless you associate the delay with a reward or future benefit.
3. Self-Confidence. The lower your self-confidence, the more likely you are to give up when you encounter an obstacle or even to start a task in the first place.
4. Impulsiveness. Someone who lives in the moment and gives no thought to future goals or consequences is prone to procrastination.
5. Conscientiousness. The less self-control you have, the less organized you are, and the less achievement oriented you are, the greater the chance you'll procrastinate.

In motivational psychology, the well-established Expectancy-Value model sheds light on why you continually check email instead of tackling next month's sales goals.

This formula says that we tend to prefer 1) immediate rewards over delayed benefits, 2) bigger rewards over smaller prizes, and 3) sure rewards over uncertain rewards.

So, the less immediate, smaller, and uncertain the rewards, the more willing you might be to delay a task and procrastinate.

In essence, procrastination is a form of incompetence. So to turn it around, the idea is to become more competent in skills and habits that counteract procrastination.

Fortunately, there is solid research that points to a solution, but like anything, it takes time, hard work, and commitment to implement. Here are 5 elements to overcoming procrastination:

1. Emotional strength. A positive attitude, goal-directed future orientation, a sense of gratitude, and simply being in touch with your moods can go a long way toward increasing your emotional strength to tackle the tasks that you tend to set aside. In addition, increasing your stress tolerance through regular exercise, good nutrition, and a getting plenty of sleep helps you have the physical resources to backstop your emotional energy.
2. Focused, rational thought. Clearing space so that you can think is key to overcoming procrastination. Make sure your work environment is conducive to being able to concentrate on your work. Also, think through what you need to do and the consequences of doing or not doing the task.
3. Time-management skills. One of the outcomes of not having good time-management skills is that it becomes easier to procrastinate. Time-management is one of the foundational skills of a leader. Being able to set goals, plan, schedule, and prioritize goes a long way towards reducing the tendency to procrastinate.
4. Learning how to change habits. If you're in a habit of not getting started, it's time to create a new habit of starting. It's been well-documented that it takes around 21-days to change a habit. Make sure you identify specific behaviors to change and then practice those new behaviors over that 3-week period.
5. Task completion abilities. The ability to hang-in and keep going despite obstacles is critical. Make sure you maintain your perspective, stay cool, and use the four other elements to keep you on track. It's also okay to celebrate the small successes along the way—encouragement can often be the difference between moving forward or falling back into your procrastination rut.

Few of us are strangers to procrastination. Fewer still actually enjoy it.

Master these skills and your productivity will soar and so will your satisfaction for getting the job done now rather than later.

## Leadership Secret #15: 7 Rock-Solid Ways to Motivate Your People

The fact that you're read this far means that you were impelled to action.

You were motivated.

Perhaps it was because of an internal need to learn more about leadership or to become a better leader. Maybe your boss told you to read it or you're doing some research for a paper.

Whatever the reason, you chose to act, you put forth effort, and you took the time to complete the task—all of which are the constituent elements of motivation.

Motivation is an indisputable part of leadership, especially because as a leader you have a great deal of control over the work environment.

The question for you is if that environment is inspiring or crushing motivation.

In either case, the following seven findings from over 80 years of formal research into motivation will help you better understand motivation and what you can do influence the motivational situation for yourself and your people.

1. You have needs. Your psychological needs are the basis of motivation. Needs affect your survival and well-being. They are physiological, psychological, and spiritual. Satisfying your needs is pleasurable. Need frustration is painful, or at least uncomfortable, but it can also be life-threatening (e.g. starvation). First articulated by Abraham Maslow, needs are front and center when it comes to motivation. Understanding the needs of your employees can thus help you understand what motivates them. Then you can create conditions to satisfy their need—as that enhances the goals and health of the organization of course.
2. Take this job and shove it. Job characteristics matter. Research over the years (e.g. Herzberg, Hackman, Oldham) has established that task variety, autonomy, recognition, opportunities to increase skills, and feedback all serve to motivate people. Motivation drops to the extent that these characteristics of the job are missing. So, make sure you explicitly address them in your hiring, job development, personal development processes to keep motivation high.



3. Whatever the mind can believe, you can achieve. The value you place on a goal or outcome and whether you expect to obtain it affects your motivation. For instance, you may place high value on winning the lottery, but you may not expect it to happen. In turn, this could lower your motivation to buy a ticket. On the other hand, perhaps an employee comes into work early and stays late, expecting that this behavior will lead to a promotion down the road.
4. And justice for all. Organizational justice—fairness and trust in the workplace—matter. When individuals believe they are being treated fairly, they tend to exhibit higher levels of job performance and more organizational citizenship behavior. They also engage in fewer conflicts and less counterproductive activity. Motivation drops when a person thinks that someone is getting a better deal, if processes are biased against an individual or group, or when leadership is perceived as being unfair.
5. I believe in me. The beliefs you have about your abilities (self-efficacy) influence your success. The stronger your belief in yourself, the more likely you are to be successful. People with high self-efficacy are more likely to relish taking on difficult tasks, work harder to overcome tough challenges, and persist in them.
6. Think big. Setting goals works. Performance goes up when goals are set. Especially specific goals that are challenging but achievable. When those goals are committed to as a team and linked to mutually valued outcomes, the resulting performance is even better. Well-constructed goals focus attention, energize effort, inspire persistence, and activate resilience in the pursuit of the goal's achievement.
7. So you think you know us. Finding out what your people are thinking is an indispensable way to diagnose the good, the bad, and the ugly going on in your organization. There are a plethora of well-constructed surveys on employee attitudes out there. Use them to understand at a deeper and more comprehensive level what's going on in their heads. Then use that data to figure out how to improve the motivational environment of the organization. Alternatively, if you don't want to be that formal, just walk around and talk to them. In all likelihood, you'll find out plenty.

As a leader, your job is to bring people together to achieve common goals. Leadership is thus fundamentally wrapped up with motivation.

Now that you know these 7 well-founded principles of motivation, you can put them to good use to bolster the motivational environment surrounding you.

## Leadership Secret #16: Take Care of Your Boss

Even though you're a leader in your own right, you're still going to have a boss. As much control as you might have, that control is always dependent in some way on your boss. The relationship you have with your boss is critically important. You need to make sure you invest the time and effort to make the relationship as mutually productive as possible.

As my military career went on, I realized how crucial it was to (1) establish credibility with my bosses, (2) keep my bosses appropriately informed, (3) help them make the best decisions possible, and (4) become indispensable to my bosses. Sometimes, this was easy and straightforward; other times, it was difficult and painful. However, either way, I had a responsibility to do my part to take care of my boss.

Toward that end, it's key to understand what makes your boss tick—to seek to understand her at a deeper level. Some questions to consider along these lines are:

- How does your boss define success in her professional career?
- How does she define success in her role?
- What are her specific career goals and aspirations?
- What are her most important performance goals and initiatives?
- How does she define personal success?
- What are her specific personal goals and aspirations?
- What is her communication style?
- What is her tolerance for risk and change?
- How does she make decisions (e.g., from a financial, technical, political, aesthetic, or other perspective)?
- What drives and motivates her to succeed?
- What behaviors on the part of employees and colleagues are sure to upset her?
- How does she prefer to take in information?
- How would you characterize her boss's personality?

It's also necessary to be on point when you interact with your boss. Treat conversations, briefings, and encounters with the professionalism they deserve. Always be prepared and understand the context of the situation at the moment. If the interaction is particularly important, take the time to structure and rehearse your approach to achieve maximum effect.

No other work-related relationship is as important, and the best way to assess this is to ask yourself some soul-searching questions. The following questions will help you with that assessment and, in fact, might make you very uncomfortable. Your answers might also surprise you.

- What does she expect you to achieve?
- What must you do well to meet her expectations?
- How would she say you are performing?
- How does she expect you to communicate progress, issues, and results?
- How well would she say you communicate with her?
- How much trust and confidence would you say she has in you? How do you know?
- How well would she say that you adapt to her style of communicating, working, and making decisions? - How committed are you to helping her succeed, on both professional and personal levels? Would she agree?
- What, if any, past issues remain unresolved between her and you?
- How can you resolve those issues or make amends?
- Would you rate her as a mentor: supportive, neutral, negative, or strongly negative toward you?
- Overall, how would you rate your professional relationship with her?
- Overall, how would you rate your personal relationship with her?

Once you've completed your assessment of your relationship, it's time to develop a plan to strengthen it or, if it's good, to maintain it. The following questions are designed to help you do either one:

- How willing are you to strengthen the relationship and make it work even better?
- What do you need to ask him to find out more about how you are performing?
- What can you do to help him look better in the organization?
- What can you do to prevent him from looking bad in the organization?
- What can you do to help him have more time to pursue his primary professional and personal interests?
- What can you do to communicate more effectively with him?
- How can you better adapt your style to work more effectively with his style?
- How can you clear up any past issues or mistakes that have occurred between you and him?
- What judgments about him can you overcome to strengthen the relationship?
- What, if anything, can you do to increase the level of trust, respect, and confidence he has in you?
- How can you improve your personal relationship with him?
- What requests do you need to make of him to improve your performance—without making him seem or feel like he is in the wrong?
- How can you better communicate the value you bring to him and the organization without being impertinent?

This section has gone deep into the dynamics of the most important relationship you have as a leader. If you've answered the questions sincerely, no doubt you've realized that you must continually invest in this relationship to make it as mutually beneficial and productive as it can be, especially in terms of your ability to take care of your boss and in terms of your ability to lead in your own area.

## Your Next Steps

Now that you've learned these leadership secrets, your next most important step is to create an action plan to put everything in motion. You can do this on your own or I can help you put one together—call me at 636-209-3270 or email me at [joe@theleadershipcrucible.com](mailto:joe@theleadershipcrucible.com) if you want my help.

Beyond this, there are three important questions that lie before you as you embark on your leadership journey.

Are you willing to step into the arena of heroic leadership with all of its joys, hardships, ups and downs, challenges, and opportunities? Your journey as a leader is one in which you venture into a role that challenges your competency, skills, and psychological mettle on a daily basis. You are going to face complex problems that threaten the success of your strategy and the ongoing survival of your organization. You will stumble and even fail along the way.

Despite these tests of your leadership, will you have the self-awareness, fortitude, resilience, faith, and humility to drive on? Your willingness to endure these crucibles will forge you into someone capable of producing a distinct and personal form of greatness.

Great leaders are exactly what we need today.

Will you be one of them?

## About the Leadership Crucible

The mission of The Leadership Crucible is to inspire hope by forging leaders who work to make the world a better place. At The Leadership Crucible, we teach executive leaders and aspiring leaders how to overcome their greatest challenges, produce results, achieve their goals, and become better leaders. Whether you are assuming new leadership responsibilities or are an established executive, we will help to make you the very best leader you can be.

The Leadership Crucible provides executive and career coaching, leadership seminars, leadership development programs, customized leadership programs, and professional-speaking tailored to individuals and organizations.

Our signature offering is The Leadership Forge, a holistic, six step process based on military strategist John Boyd's work in classic military strategy, operational campaign planning, practical execution, and feedback at the tactical level—in the trenches, where real leadership happens.

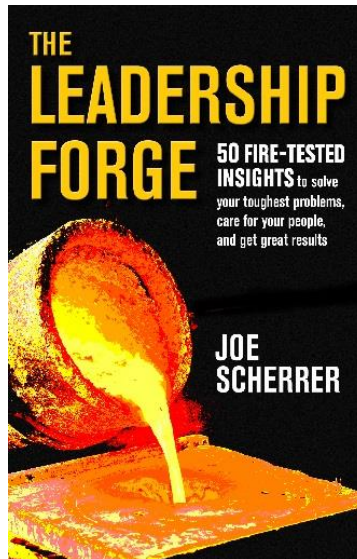
The Leadership Forge builds a framework to guide our clients through an experience- and research-based leadership development curriculum founded on time-tested military principles. The step-by-step framework consists of discovery, mission analysis, mission planning, deployment, intelligence assessment, and mission debrief.

The heart of The Leadership Forge approach is coaching leaders to produce and implement individualized campaign plans. These plans are built to effect change, drive results, and develop the participant's full potential as a leader.

## TO CONTACT THE LEADERSHIP CRUCIBLE

To learn more about our services or to share your insights, thoughts, and comments about this book, please visit our website, [theleadershipcrucible.com](http://theleadershipcrucible.com); e-mail [joe@theleadershipcrucible.com](mailto:joe@theleadershipcrucible.com); or call 636-209-3270.

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