

## Go-To Leadership Contrasts

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This is a toolkit for the developing managers and aspiring leaders who were promoted because of their performance as an individual contributor but were never formally taught to lead. There is a choice to make in every situation, and these choices make or break success.

Developing managers can learn to make the right choices to move up in impact and their career. However, this requires a significant mind shift. This shift requires education and situational awareness, along with the ability to learn from both successes and mistakes.

## A Mind Shift for New Leaders

### Individual Contributor

#### Serve as a Contributor

*Elevate your individual performance*

#### Expand Skills

*Expand your core functional competencies and capabilities*

#### Display Your Talent

*Improve your ability to work with others and excel in your role*

#### Create Track Record of Delivery

*Consistently deliver on time and with high quality*

### Organizational Leader

#### Serve as the Catalyst

*Elevate the performance and energy of those around you*

#### Expand Perspectives

*Expand the possibilities, paths and potential with those around you*

#### Unleash the Talent

*Empower and equip your players to be their best individually and together*

#### Create Operational Excellence

*Enable the team to do the right things right, identify and overcome challenges*

Developing leaders will make mistakes, see mistakes of others, and must continuously learn from those mistakes. However, they can often accelerate their learning with clear **contrasts** between the harmful choices and optimal choices they can make in every situation. This toolkit is meant to provide a brief reference for these contrasting choices in 4 key areas, serving as a guide for the required mind shift to move up in level of impact and levels of leadership.

Senior executives need 'Go-To' leaders that can put themselves in their shoes, comprehending the needs of the entire business and the organizations that are chartered to bring the organization and company to the next level.

Executives will trust, empower, reward and ultimately promote those Go-To Leaders who:

1. **Serve as the catalyst** for igniting a fire in their organization
2. **Expand perspectives** to provide the bigger picture context
3. **Unleash the talent** that success or failure depends on
4. **Create operational excellence** to meet or exceed goals

## Toolkit Contents (hyper-linked to brief summaries below)

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**Roles and Contrasting Choices Leaders Must Make****Serve as the Catalyst**

*Elevate the performance and energy of those around you*

**Use the Stick or Enrich the Carrot**

- **Stick-focused leaders** rely on fear, punishment, or pressure to drive results, creating a culture of compliance but not commitment. It can help in the short term but backfire in the long term.
- **Carrot-enriching leaders** motivate through recognition, rewards, and meaningful opportunities, fostering engagement and loyalty. By “enriching the carrot” with the importance of the tasks, role and team’s dependence on their execution, it can provide a larger sense of responsibility and urgency to help shape short term behavior.

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## Raise the Fear or Raise the Bar

- **Fear-raising leaders** rely on intimidation or pressure to push performance, creating a toxic environment. They utilize a 'push' strategy to force short term results but often continue with the same approach to drive the next sets of deliverables.
- **Bar-raising leaders** set high expectations while providing support and encouragement, inspiring their teams to reach new heights. They utilize a 'pull' strategy to drive both short- and longer-term results. They typically link this higher-level bar to externally visible impact that are meaningful to customers, employees and the company.

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## Suck Energy or Create Energy

- **Energy Sucking leaders** show unpredictable and toxic behaviors, driving employees into avoidance and disengagement. They can also become consumed in negativity, dramatically lowering the team's energy and productivity.
- **Energy Creating leaders** consistently inspire their employees with purpose, acknowledgement, recognition, empowerment and positivity. They recognize that each inspired employee inspires other employees and entire teams, which further raises levels of the team's commitment, engagement and productivity.

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## Get Action or Alignment

- **Action-obsessed leaders** prematurely impose their choices without considering whether the team is aligned behind the decision. This puts both morale and execution at risk.
- **Alignment-focused leaders** ensure that decisions are made at the right time and in the right way that enables alignment and high-performance execution. These decisions must be grounded in a shared view of reality and link to goals in a clear context and framework.

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## Be a Manager or a Mobilizer

- **People-managing leaders** see their role as assigning and monitoring tasks and ensuring that those tasks are executed by each employee in a timely fashion.
- **Team-mobilizing leaders** see their role as empowering and energizing their entire team around a shared mission and clearly defined goals and success criteria. They also enable their team to work together effectively with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

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## Dictate the Path or Hold the Torch

- **Path-dictating leaders** outline every step of the journey, leaving little room for creativity, potential to identify and overcome unexpected obstacles, or ownership of team members.
- **Torch-holding leaders** illuminate the way forward while empowering their teams to navigate unexpected challenges and take initiative. They expand perspectives and possibilities. They also link the torch to a higher cause and purpose, which enhances motivation and energy.

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## Take the Credit or Give the Credit

- **Credit-taking leaders** claim recognition for team achievements, eroding trust and morale. They typically are insecure and believe self-promotion is justified and necessary.
- **Acknowledging leaders** celebrate their team's efforts and give credit where it's due, building loyalty and motivation. They know that their own insecurities must take a back seat, and their job as a leader is to mobilize and empower others to succeed. They are comfortable that the results will speak for themselves.

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## Expand Perspectives

*Expand the possibilities, paths and potential with those around you*

## Catastrophize or Strategize

- **Catastrophizing leaders** become consumed by worst-case scenarios during challenging times. They are obsessed with only negative 'what ifs' that are unlikely to happen. This can lead to a lack of confidence in leadership by the team, and unnecessary stress and high workloads.
- **Strategic leaders** stay calm under pressure, put challenges into a larger perspective, and break problems into manageable steps with actionable solutions. They also remove their emotions and biases, and balance the 'what ifs', recognizing and planning for both the good and bad scenarios.

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## Live in a Dot or Connect Dots

- **Dot-focused leaders** get stuck in isolated tasks, immediate problems or a subset of required domains of expertise without seeing the bigger picture. This also results in limited trust by higher level leaders, who have broader goals they are held accountable for.
- **Dot-connecting leaders** link individual functions and tasks to broader goals, and combine diverse sources of information to create new perspectives and options. They also help their teams maximize their collective impact by combining unique sources of talent.

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## Think Inside-Out or Outside-In

- **Inside-out thinkers** focus only on internal perspectives and narrow fields of vision, often missing external opportunities or challenges. They think about their own situations and functions with limited context and perspective on the bigger picture.
- **Outside-in thinkers** consider external trends, customer needs, interdependencies and market dynamics to inform their strategies and decisions. They are then able to map the implications of those external factors and the higher goals of the company to internal mandates and operational structure.

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## Give Opinions or Frameworks

- **Opinion-giving leaders** dominate conversations with their own views, limiting creativity and collaboration. They also incorrectly assume others share the same context for the challenge at hand, leading to poor communication, confusion and/or disengagement.
- **Framework-focused leaders** encourage diverse input using perspective expanding frameworks that provide context, structure, and best in class models for collaboration, innovation and inclusive decision-making. Often these frameworks make the best path self-evident to all and set up a common structure for effective execution.

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## Optimize the Short Term or Horizons

- **Short Term-focused leaders** view quarterly and yearly achievements as an endpoint, leading to a lack of sustainability and/or scalability when the period ends. They also are limited in long-term planning skills, needing to be told exactly what the next hurdle is.

- **Horizon-focused leaders** see near term accomplishments as steppingstones toward new possibilities and growth. These leaders use multiple phases - or 'horizons' - to define a roadmap for expansion and transformation over a multi-year period. This allows them to plan for scenarios, anticipate needed changes and build solid foundations for the future.

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## Be the Builder or the Architect

- **Builder-focused leaders** concentrate on building blocks of a larger structure. Whether it be a foundation or a roof, it emphasizes implementation over the design of a business or initiative. Teams may implement something right, but it may not be the right thing to do.
- **Architect-focused leaders** create frameworks and systems that do the right things right. They architect an entire structure, with a foundation, pillars and attributes of each pillar that make-or-break success. They then use the architecture to inspire, mobilize and empower their team's to build the blocks and to integrate those blocks into a powerful system.

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## Fix the Cog or the System

- **Cog-fixing leaders** focus on isolated inefficiencies without considering how they fit with other parts of the process and how other cogs and the overall systems may be impacted.
- **System-thinking leaders** clearly define and optimize systems and processes holistically to improve overall performance with coordinated alignment of all elements. They think hierarchically, starting with the architecture to the functional blocks and defined interfaces.

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## Be Emotionally Detached or Emotionally Intelligent

- **Emotionally Detached leaders** ignore the emotional dynamics of themselves and their team, leading to disengagement or conflict. They lack basic awareness of their own reactions, stress responses, and emotions, which leads to inappropriate behaviors. This also leads to an inability to understand and support their team members effectively.
- **Emotionally Intelligent leaders** possess the ability to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions while also effectively identifying and responding to the emotions of others. These leaders exhibit key competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Their impact on team performance is significant, as they create a work environment that fosters open communication, trust, and collaboration.

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## **Unleash the Talent**

*Empower and equip your players to be their best individually and together*

### **Be a Master or a Servant**

- **Master-focused leaders** prioritize authority and control over their team members' needs or growth, often feeding their own ego and/or optimizing for very short-term results. They are self-centered, rather than focused on their employees and what they need to succeed.
- **Servant-focused leaders** prioritize supporting their team's success by removing obstacles and providing resources and mentorship, while defining clear goals and accountability. These leaders believe they actually work for their employees.

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### **Find the Weaknesses or the Gifts**

- **Weakness-focused leaders** focus on weaknesses or deficiencies in their team members' performance or skills, often reducing individual motivation and ability to contribute.
- **Gift-finding leaders** identify strengths and unique talents in their team members, leveraging the combination of these unique talents for success of the whole. Some call these 'super-powers'. They provide recognition of gifts to boost motivation and productivity, along with some key weaknesses highlighted for improvement as a learning goal.
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### **Justify Conflict or Clarity**

- **Conflict-justifying leaders** accept misunderstandings or disagreements as inevitable without addressing their root causes or taking ownership of conflict resolution. This often leads to escalations and sub-par team performance.
- **Clarity-building leaders** proactively define problems to solve, share critical data, set goals, establish team roles and facilitate open communication to prevent unnecessary conflict. When there is a conflict, they take a pause to nip it in the bud by addressing the root causes.

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### **Hoard Knowledge or Open Knowledge**

- **Knowledge-hoarding leaders** withhold information to maintain control or power over others. This greatly limits the leverage of great talent who are handicapped by gaps in both background context, problem definitions and solution constraints.



- **Transparent leaders** share knowledge and data openly, building trust and enabling their teams to make better informed decisions. Sharing of context, including externally driven changes and challenges also facilitates alignment behind key programs and initiatives.

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## Clarify Tasks or Roles

- **Task-clarifying leaders** focus mostly on what needs to be done without defining team roles and responsibilities or desired outcomes clearly. This leads to potential team conflict and delivery shortcomings.
- **Role-clarifying leaders** ensure everyone understands their responsibilities, and how they contribute to shared goals in a variety of ways. They make it clear who is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed for each major function and program. This can greatly increase the leverage of each contributor and improve the speed of execution.

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## Think the Worst or Bring Out the Best

- **Think the Worst leaders** assume failure or incompetence in others, creating a culture of fear and loss of self-esteem and confidence. This often leads to micromanagement, lower productivity, high risk aversion, missed deadlines and the disengagement of employees.
- **Empowering leaders** inspire confidence and trust in their people and create a culture of continuous learning and expansion of strengths. They also tend to act as a coach and mentor, rather than a boss or task master, encouraging their people to step up to the next level, but being there to help them along the way.

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## Use People or Build People

- **People-using leaders** treat team members as tools to achieve their own goals, which is immediately recognized by employees. They also don't try to understand each unique person and their wants and needs. This leads to a lack of trust and disengagement.
- **People-building leaders** invest in their team's growth, providing opportunities for learning and development. They take the time to understand each unique individual and become personal coaches and mentors. This leads to high engagement, productivity and trust.

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## Be a Mind Reader or a Mind Explorer

- **Mind-reading leaders** make assumptions about others' needs or intentions without asking questions. They become convinced that they know not only what others think, but how they feel, what they expect from others and what results are desired.
- **Inquiring leaders** actively listen and seek understanding through open communication. They understand that every superior, peer and employee are human beings with intertwined emotions, goals, self-worth, expertise, information, expectations and experiences. They know they don't know what others need, think or feel, and therefore ask questions to explore.

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## Create Operational Excellence

*Enable the team to do the right things right, overcome challenges and continuously increase their impact*

### Assume Success or Define Success

- **Assuming leaders** believe they already understand the expectations and needs of others and the business. They don't reach out to their superiors, peers or employees who may have a different view of what's needed, and therefore how to evaluate results.
- **Success-defining leaders** collaborate to set clear goals that align with shared objectives. They actively reach out to stakeholders and experts who are best equipped to define criteria for success. When there are deficiencies, they actively learn both the 'what' and the 'why'.

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### Do-it-all or Focus on What Matters

- **Do-it-all leaders** try to have their teams do everything possible and all at once, becoming overwhelmed and burned out. Over time, it also leads to inadequate, incomplete or low quality work from themselves and their teams.
- **Prioritizing leaders** focus on what matters most, delegating effectively and managing time wisely to achieve the most impactful results. They ruthlessly prioritize, considering the must haves, nice to haves, do the minimum ("to keep the lights on"), defer and don't do items. They know that focus leads to great results, and dilution of resources is counterproductive.

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### Be Reactive or Proactive

- **Reactive leaders** wait for problems to arise before taking action, often feeling overwhelmed by constant firefighting. Of course this effect ripples throughout the lower levels of the organization, often leading to a sense of hopefulness and burnout.

- **Proactive leaders** anticipate challenges, plan ahead, and create solutions before issues escalate, fostering a sense of control and confidence. They also design their organizations to be adaptive, with clear but somewhat evolving priorities and goals.

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## Wait for Perfection or Go for Progress

- **Perfectionist leaders** obsess over every detail of plans and aspects of programs or deliverables that have minimal overall impact. What makes this especially painful is the unnecessary delays to make incremental progress, and the churn it creates for the team.
- **Progress focused leaders** prioritize getting going fast as an aligned team, ready to refine, learn or improve wherever necessary. They know that they will never have the entire picture until they jump in and get going, so there is no real definition of 'perfect'. They also know that even incremental progress on what matters the most can make or break success.

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## Provide Assertions or Options

- **Assertion-driven leaders** push their ideas as answers without considering alternatives or needed collaboration. This can shut down the sharing of key data and better ideas. When presented to a superior, it can also backfire due to incorrect assumptions.
- **Option-defining leaders** present multiple pathways with their positives and negatives, and encourage their teams modify or add additional options or new considerations. This encourages active engagement, more creativity, better alignment and optimal decisions.

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## Address Symptoms or Root Causes

- **Symptom-addressing leaders** fix surface-level issues without addressing the underlying problems, leading to a recurrence or worsening of the same or new problems later.
- **Root-cause-focused leaders** dig deeper to identify and resolve the core issues for sustainable solutions. They are curious about 'why', are focused on the prevention of these problems in the future, and the continuous improvement of their systems and processes.

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## Know-it-all or Know-you-don't-know

- **Know-it-all leaders** assume they either know what other people think, understand domains and functions that are not their expertise, and/or have all the answers. They often overlook valuable context, experience, and insights from others, including their own managers.
- **Curious leaders** embrace humility, seek feedback, and continuously learn from those around them. They truly know that they don't know what they don't know, are very open to new perspectives, criteria for success and options for moving forward. They are typically valued for their ability to contribute directly and to uncover new information or ideas.

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## React or WAIT

- **Reacting leaders** jump to conclusions or decisions without fully understanding the situation or what is being said. They often share frustration openly, shut down others before their expertise or data can be shared, and reduce motivation, innovation and collaboration.
- **WAIT (Why Am I Talking?) leaders** pause to reflect, ask insightful questions, and seek clarity before responding. They prioritize active listening and emotional intelligence, and value a structured process to get to the best answer.

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## Balance the Work or Balance the Life

- **Work-obsessed leaders** prioritize productivity and delivery at all costs, often neglecting the well-being of their teams. They don't believe that other non-work items are relevant to the workplace, and limit human understanding and connections.
- **Life-balancing leaders** encourage a healthy work-life balance, understanding that sustainable success requires rest, fulfillment, and personal growth. They also try to understand the unique needs, constraints and special demands of each individual and provide flexibility wherever possible without compromising expected results.

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