

5 HABITS — OF — EMPOWERING LEADERS



Introduction

Being a leader is not what a lot of people think it is. There is a certain romanticism that many people associate with leadership. They think it means being fearless, in-charge, and the ultimate authority within a power structure. Thus, leadership tends to appeal to people who enjoy power. Often that results in leaders who wield said power unwisely, which results in the company – and the leader – crashing and burning.

Just as common is the unwilling leader: the leader who has their leadership thrust upon them by their organization with zero say in the matter. This person is selected to become a leader because of good work they have done, or because of their loyalty to the company – with little attention paid to whether or not they would actually make a good *leader*.

Because just like programming, accounting, and project management... leadership is a skill. It's a skill that you can have a natural affinity for, and it's a skill that you can develop and cultivate. But it's certainly a *skill* and one that you need to treat as such when becoming the best leader you can become. The good news is that while this skill is an innate trait for some, it's also one that we can train and develop with practice and dedication. In this short report, you'll learn five habits of empowering leaders that you can learn from.

Remaining Calm

One of the single and most powerful habits of a truly empowering leader is to stay calm no matter what is going on around them.

What is important to understand, is that as a leader, it is your job to set the “tone” for the office. Your followers will always look to you for the appropriate response to any given situation.

Imagine then for a moment that you have just learned your company is in serious debt, and that there are going to need to be lay-offs. You have two options now: one is to panic, shout, and potentially even *blame* your staff (this is an example of poor EQ, which is discussed in a moment). The other option is to remain calm and collected, and to deliver the news in an honest but optimistic manner.

Your choice here is extremely crucial, because it will define the way that your *team* reacts as well. When you are in a financial crisis as a company, the last thing you need is for all your staff to stop working properly. When staff panic, they of course *do stop working properly*.

That's why it's the leader's job to remain calm, and to communicate to their team that it is *okay* to be calm.

Incidentally, this is also one of the traits that is considered to be "alpha" by many – the ability to control your own emotion and to make the decision that is best for the group as a whole.

Making Quick Decisions

Already we can see that the truly empowering leader is nothing like the caricature version that we discussed at the start of this report. Shouting and blustering just creates ill feelings, which are not conducive to a highly productive and happy team.

In fact, your position is one that should be taken with a noble calmness. Your role is to sacrifice yourself, by putting your emotional needs secondary to the group. That means remaining totally calm, when the world is collapsing around you – so that your team can continue to work to the best of their ability.

Likewise, it is also your job to take responsibility when things *do* go wrong. It is this concern that in fact prevents many people from becoming natural leaders.

Let's step back for a moment and look at a mundane, domestic example. Let's imagine that you are shopping for food with your partner, when they ask which flavor of soup you want for dinner. A common response is to say "I don't mind."

What does this really mean? It usually means that you want the other person to be happy, so they should choose.

BUT in doing this, you have actually just shifted responsibility onto that person. Now it is up to them to choose soup that will result in your evening being a good one or a bad one.

And perhaps the real reason you didn't want to make that decision, is because you didn't want them to be unhappy with you! Perhaps you can relate, or perhaps you can just imagine how this might play out. But ultimately, that desire to be "liked" or "in the good books," has actually placed more pressure and stress on the other person AND made you seem indecisive and a weak leader.

Now this same thing plays out in the office, every time you are asked to make a decision about purchasing, about branding, or about marketing... and you defer or delay.

We umm and ahhh often because we don't want to take responsibility and we don't want to commit to what might turn out to be a wrong decision. But strong leaders NEED to take responsibility, and they need to take decisive action that will inspire their team.

Empathising

One of the most important traits of any great leader is emotional intelligence or "EQ." This term refers to your ability to understand the emotions – and therefore motivations – of other people.

As a leader, this will give you the ability to understand why someone might be motivated to complete the work you set, or why they might *not* feel inclined to complete it at all.

Likewise, it means that you can better choose the correct language and phrasing to get the desired response out of someone. This is particularly important – as the way you deliver an instruction can completely change its tone and thus its likelihood of being followed through on.

This is something that a LOT of leader's lack, and it can lead to huge difficulties within office environments.

The good news is that emotional intelligence *is* something that can be trained. It effectively amounts to sensitivity.

But how do you go about measuring such an abstract concept? Well that all depends on who you ask and in fact there are three separate 'models' of EQ each with their own views on the subject.

The Ability Model

The ability model comes from psychologists Salovey and Mayer who describe EQ purely in terms of 'ability'. In this case it is the ability to 'perceive and integrate emotion' and the 'capacity to reason about emotion' all with the end goal of enhancing personal growth. It also encompasses the ability to

manage emotion – i.e. not fly off the handle at the slightest provocation and to know how to calm others down.

Ability model-based tests are the most similar to IQ tests but in some cases, the answer is more subjective, though guided by 'social norms'.

The Mixed Model

The mixed model introduced by Daniel Goleman, suggests that EQ encompasses a vast array of separate skills and competencies but also focuses mostly on leadership. These skills and abilities can generally be broken down into the following items:

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Social skill
- Empathy
- Motivation

Whether or not 'motivation' can be considered an aspect of emotional intelligence however is a contentious point. Thus, the validity of the Mixed Model is called into question *but* it remains perhaps the most popular interpretation among businesses due to the focus on leadership skills.

The Trait Model

The Trait Model from Konstantinos Vasilis Petrides is one that views EQ more as a series of 'traits' rather than abilities. This subtle difference suggests a less trainable set of abilities. In fact, this model goes as far as to suggest that EI itself *is* a personality trait and should be assessed within larger personality frameworks.

The Trait Model is measured via self-report which may make it unreliable but it has given birth to one of the more popular EQ tests: the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire.

The moral of the story is that no theory of EQ is perfect, so you need to use your *own* EQ when assessing your ability and that of others.

Explaining the WHY

Good communication is born partly out of this emotional intelligence. One example of this can be seen when choosing how to deliver instructions. Someone with poor emotional intelligence might command their followers to do as they say: to just “get on with it and not ask questions.”

But this tends to rub people up the wrong way, because it doesn't make them feel like an integral and valued part of the team. While you are going to take responsibility for mistakes, that doesn't mean removing *autonomy* or credit from your followers.

What's more, is that when you only give direct instructions, you actually prevent your team from being agile and adaptable to the situation. If you've told them to complete a certain task in a specific way and a problem arises, then they are going to have to return to you in order to get further instruction on how to proceed. This *forces* you to become a micromanager.

The simple solution is to provide a “why” or an explanation. That means that instead of saying:

“Go and get all the files on our recent clients”

You instead say:

“I'm looking for information on Mrs Doberman, can you please call up the files on our recent clients?”

Now, if the information is missing for whatever reason, the member of staff can look for *other* ways to retrieve that information before they come back to you in order to ask more questions. You've empowered them to work flexibly, which has instantly given them more control over their own work.

Speaking With Charisma

While many of these tips have addressed leadership styles and approaches, there are also some more straightforward aspects to consider.

For instance: the way you speak. Do you command attention when you give instructions? Do you speak so that others wish to listen?

This is again something that many people will possess inherently, but it's also something that can be trained.

Usually, when we notice someone delivering a speech that is highly engaging, we will notice that they use large gesticulations and hand movements. This is effective because the movements show that their body language concurs with what they are saying – in turn making us believe it more. At the same time, those bigger movements are more attention grabbing and will help to make the person seem more interesting and dynamic.

Try to always speak from a place of emotion. Think about the way what you are saying makes you feel, and channel that so that your whole body comes alive with what you are saying.

At the same time, try to slow down what you are saying. We all have a tendency to speak quickly, but by slowing down ever so slightly, you can actually appear more confident, more intelligent, and even better spoken! Try leaving the occasional silence between sentences. When you do this, you will demonstrate an immense amount of confidence and mastery: you are making your audience *wait* on what you are going to say next! These tips can all help a great deal, but they still won't be easy for everyone to develop naturally. That's why one last tip is to consider taking up acting classes, or even doing standup comedy! This can train you to become accustomed to speaking in front of large audiences while remaining calm.

The acting in particular meanwhile can show you how to project your voice with power and confidence, and to make full use of the space.

But really the best way to sound confident, passionate, and in-charge? That's to actually *feel* that way, and to really believe in the message that you are delivering.

If you can practice these five habits, then you will develop a highly engaging style of leadership: you will be engaging, dynamic, confident, and someone that others feel they can trust. What's more, is that you will be protecting them so that they can do their very best work.