



5 Perspectives About Mindset Every Ambitious Leader Needs to Know

By Karl Sprague / January 26, 2022



Your mindset as a leader will determine your success. Or failure.

You can't operate on auto pilot and lead successfully. Intentionality is key.

Let's put this on the table: leadership isn't easy. Period.

You're dealing with challenges. Accept it. Embrace it. If challenges didn't exist, you might not be needed. 🙄

You're dealing with people. And we all have our share of baggage that we bring to work every day. Your direct reports. Your boss. You. 😬

You're dealing with uncertainty. Life is not linear. There will be bumps in the road and surprises around the corner.

The sooner you can embrace the following five perspectives, the sooner you can get real traction in leading people and accomplishing objectives. Meaningful goals. Impressive results.

Whether you are sixteen or sixty, leading two people or two thousand, these aren't just helpful perspectives.

They're necessary.

1. Personal Responsibility

You are responsible for your own actions and ultimately, for your own success. Not your parents, your education, your boss, or your bank account. Sure, other people and circumstances can impact you — positively and negatively.

But you decide how you will engage with others. How you will react to circumstances. How you will interpret events around you.

There are people around you who don't care about your development or your success.

There are some out there who may actually want you to fail. Yes, it's not fair.

There are circumstances that you will have to deal with, like health issues. Relationships. Extreme weather. Black swan events. Pandemics. Just like 7.9 billion other human beings in the world.

Other people and outside circumstances shouldn't define you. Don't let them.

Don't approach life as a victim. Victimhood gives you an excuse.

Excuses become explanations for falling short of goals. For not doing what you said you would do. For not taking action.

You're better than that.

Victimhood also gives power to others. That's your power. Don't give it to anyone else.

Every setback or obstacle in your path is an opportunity. To learn. To grow. To get stronger. If you run from every obstacle, you'll never successfully lead people. Overcoming obstacles and reaching your destination better prepares you for your next challenge. It also makes you a leader worth following.

The moment you take responsibility for everything in your life is the moment you can change anything in your life — Hal Elrod

2. Take Action...Now...Right Now

When you think about successful leaders in any area of life, they had something in common with heroes in stories. They took action. Elon Musk or Indiana Jones. Susan Blakely or Katniss Everdeen.

Despite doubters, obstacles, setbacks or uncertainty...they took action.

You can't wish yourself to success. A plan is worthless unless you execute it. A vision never gets achieved just by talking about it.

Focused action on your priorities is powerful. When you can align a team and takes relentless action, amazing results can be achieved.

A compelling vision draws others in, but when you take focused action in pursuit of that vision you radiate energy. The energy is contagious.

When a team is engaged in relentless pursuit of a common goal, it creates momentum. Momentum allows you to ignore bumps in the road and blow past challenges like they didn't exist.

But it requires you, the leader, to take the first step.

You're not taking action for action's sake. Consider your options, plan your first step, and then take action. Now.

Richard Branson, the charismatic leader of Virgin Group, embraces bold ideas, supported by bold actions. One of his favorite slogans is "Screw it, let's do it."

Employees at any of the sixty Virgin Group companies are drawn to his willingness to take action. To try to do the difficult. What others know to be challenging. What some think to be impossible.

Action is the foundational key to all success. — Pablo Picasso

3. Learn Constantly (and Unlearn When Appropriate)

The most successful leaders are lifelong learners. They understand that change is constant and the pace of change is accelerating.

That reality forces you to constantly challenge yourself to learn — and challenge what you think you already know.

You're not seeking to learn just for knowledge's sake. You're not preparing to be a contestant on Jeopardy.

You're seeking to learn and to apply that knowledge to your circumstances. To your challenges. To your goals. To your team.

Diversity on a team is healthy. Diversity of background. Skills. Perspective. Thought.

Use diversity to allow you to learn and continually shape your context for how — and why — you do what you do.

Regardless of your age, you will reach a point in life when your contemporaries start to glorify the “old days,” and get cynical about where things are headed. Sure, have core values that keep you grounded, but embrace the future and the opportunities it presents.

Metaverse. NFTs. Quantum computing. AI. VR. How we work. Where we work. Where we live.

How quickly those arrive and how significantly they impact us? To be determined. But it will be less of a cultural leap for young leaders to embrace the possibilities. It will require older generations to listen to your generation, or risk the peril of missing the opportunities altogether.

Fundamental to the learning process is a willingness to challenge what you thought you knew.

The circumstances change. New information surfaces. Growth isn't just about what you add. It includes what you subtract. What you change.

Watch out for confirmation bias. It is dangerous. When you seek evidence that supports what you already believe, it can stunt growth. Challenge yourself to learn new perspectives and consider new ideas. Changing your mind — for the right reasons — can lead to growth and sets a powerful example.

“The purpose of learning isn't to affirm our beliefs; it's to evolve our beliefs.” — Adam Grant

4. Let Others Be the Heroes



Many people who are given leadership opportunities started their careers as high performers. They got results. They put up the numbers. They could be counted on to deliver.

For too many people with a leadership title, they never adapt to accomplishing goals through other people. They try to get results in spite of their team members. The work is still about them and their performance.

That isn't scalable. They become the bottleneck. The impediment to growth.

Your role as a leader is to get things done through other people and to develop them in the process.

Donald Miller's recent book *Hero on a Mission* describes the four different characters in any story: the victim, the villain, the hero, and the guide.

High performers are the heroes. They overcome obstacles to slay the dragon, get the results, win the prize.

Some people in leadership positions struggle to give that up. They like being the hero.

Successful leaders recognize that they need to become guides, and see their role as guiding other heroes on their way.

But when you look at the members of your team, do you know what you need to see?

Heroes in the making. And you can help them get there.

In order to do that successfully, it is critical to be attuned to how others experience you.

Do you achieve goals but leave dead bodies in your wake? It happens all too frequently.

Do you hold your direct reports to a higher standard than you model for them yourself? You've got to role model the behaviors you expect.

Do you hold them accountable when required, or are you an enabler? Some leaders want to be liked by their team members and tolerate poor behavior and poor results. When your accountability is based on clarity of expectations and mutual respect, high performers will thrive.

Whether you're delegating a task or sharing a vision, your employees want to know how they will be impacted. Take the time to discuss and provide the context and any relevant insights.

5. Your Brand Is Being Shaped 24 / 7 / 365

When you're a leader everyone on your team is watching you.

All the time.

Don't be paranoid, just accept that they are.

Unfortunately, when you're a leader, you don't get to decide when you want to be on stage and when you want to fly under the radar. You don't get excused for unacceptable behavior because you were having "a bad day."

Whether you're in the office or not, whether its during work hours or not...they're watching.

Do you role model the behaviors you want in others or do you exhibit the "do as I say, not as I do" philosophy?

Do you actively listen when they're speaking to you?

Pay particular attention to how you use your phone. Might they conclude that you think your phone is more important than they are?

Be careful. They'll never understand that you're solving the world's problems on your phone. They may conclude that someone else somewhere else is more important to you than they are.

Or that you're desperately seeking a diversion so that you won't have to waste you time with them.

Ouch.

Also, keep in mind when you tell a team member that you are going to do something.

Treat it like a promise.

You're setting the example for your entire team to Do What You Say You're Going to Do. Be a person of your word. It builds trust. It fosters mutual respect.

When you make a commitment, you build hope. When you keep it, you build trust. — Stephen Covey.

Keep in mind: what you say matters. What you do matters.

They're watching. Make sure that's a good thing.

Focus on THEM



Photo by Vlad Hilitanu on Unsplash

Leading other people can be incredibly rewarding. But the role carries its own challenges.

Things will come flying at you that you didn't anticipate.

The journey will have its share of surprises.

While you're achieving goals, you have to remember that you are leading people. You're impacting their careers. Their livelihoods.

It's not a part-time role.

You need to lead with intentionality and discipline. While the spotlight of leadership is on you, focus on your team. Make them the heroes.

In order to excel as a leader, it requires the right mindset. These five perspectives will help you succeed.

To accomplish your goals.

To develop your team.

To be the leader that others want to follow.

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