Becoming the Best Leader You Can Be

Barry Posner
Professor of Leadership @ Santa Clara University
Co-Author: The Leadership Challenge

2015 NAEP
District VI Annual Meeting
October 5, 2015
“I think good people deserve good leadership. The people I manage deserve the best leadership in the world.”

Debi Coleman, Board of Directors, Synopsys and opening case in the first edition of The Leadership Challenge
The World Wants Better Leaders
1) What percent of respondents think there is a leadership crisis in the world today?

86%

2) Where does leadership development rank in 2015 talent management priorities?

3) What percent of companies are seriously worried about their leadership pipelines?

86%

4) What percent of employers think that leadership development should begin by age 21?

97%

Source: Center for Creative Leadership, 2012 Leadership Insights Survey
5) What is the average age managers first receive leadership training?

42

About 10 years after they begin supervising people!

What is the question asked most frequently about leadership?

“Are leaders born or made?”
All leaders are born and made. 

No one is a zero!
99.99956% Leaders

What do other people assess these people’s leadership behaviors:

- Managers? 99.99990%
- Co-Workers? 99.99987%
- Direct Reports? 99.99985%

© James M. Kouzes & Barry Z. Posner. All Rights reserved.
Do the Math!

What’s the probability of finding someone with a score of zero in:

(a) 100-person organization?
(b) 1,000-person organization?
(c) 10,000-person organization?
Question

At your tables, what are your thoughts about this question:

“What needs to be cultivated within individuals in order for them to learn to become the best leaders they can be?”
Becoming the Best

To become the best leader you need to:

1. Believe you can
2. Aspire to excel
3. Challenge yourself
4. Engage support
5. Practice deliberately
Believe you can
“You point out a very vital attribute of leaders that I was not aware of. Leaders believe in their abilities to make a difference....”

Dan Wong, Multimedia Solutions Fellow, AMD
“so the very first step is to acknowledge that I can improve my leadership skills and reminding myself that I can make a difference. All I need is a positive mindset to look for opportunities and a willingness to take initiative.”

Dan Wong, Multimedia Solutions Fellow, AMD

© James M. Kouzes & Barry Z. Posner. All Rights reserved.
“Unless you believe that your action can produce change, you probably won’t try.”

Albert Bandura, Stanford
“People who believe that talent can be developed are the ones who really push, stretch, confront their own mistakes and learn from them.”

Carol S. Dweck, in NY Times, 07/06/08
**Ability and Performance**

![Graph showing the relationship between acquirable and inherent performance over time (T1, T2, T3). The graph illustrates that acquirable performance decreases over time, while inherent performance remains stable.]

Source: A. Bandura, Stanford University
Cultivation Tip

Be sending this message to people in your organization:

“You make a significant difference in the lives of the people you lead. You can learn—and have the responsibility—to become a better leader than you are today.”
“...those who lead primarily from values-based motivations...outperform those who lead with instrumental outcomes and rewards.”

Organizational Commitment*

Clarity about organization’s values

Clarity about my values


© James M. Kouzes & Barry Z. Posner. All Rights reserved.
“...those who lead primarily from values-based motivations outperform those who lead with instrumental outcomes and rewards.”

Importance of “Forward Looking”

In Leaders 71%
In Colleagues 27%
“A good hockey player plays where the puck is. 

A great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be.”

Wayne Gretzky  
Leading Point-Scorer in NHL History
Cultivation Tip

Imagine a time in the future—could be 2, 5, 10 years—and write about your ideal self. What are your character strengths, your guiding beliefs, and your vision of the future?
3 Challenge Yourself
Tell us about a time when you were at your personal best as a leader.
“Adversity reveals character, it doesn’t build it.”

Randy Melville, SVP/GM, Pepsi-Frito Lay, quoting his basketball coach Pete Carill

© James M. Kouzes & Barry Z. Posner. All Rights reserved.
INSTEAD OF RISKING ANYTHING NEW, LET'S PLAY IT SAFE BY CONTINUING OUR SLOW DECLINE INTO OBSOLESCENCE.
“You never know where one step will take you. And you never know where the next one will lead.

The difference in being a leader is that you take the step.”

Melissa Poe Hood, Founder of Kids F.A.C.E.
“I’d bet there isn’t a single highly successful person who hasn’t depended on grit.”

Angela Duckworth, University of Pennsylvania
Cultivation Tip

Look for the patterns in your life:

“Look back at both the peaks and valleys in your life. What enabled you to bounce back from the lows? What motivated you to reach for that peak?”
“Having just one supportive, stable relationship is an important condition to transcending adversity.”

“Pity the leader caught between unloving critics and uncritical lovers.”

John Gardner, *On Leadership*
“You might not like the feedback. But it is the only way you can develop yourself as a leader.”

Marcus Stafford, Westpac Bank
“The opportunity to watch others who have mastered a practice is extremely helpful to strengthening beliefs in self-effectiveness.”

Source: A. Bandura, Self-Efficacy
Cultivation Tip

Draw a series of concentric circles with you in the middle. Identify the people who make up your supportive relationships (coach, mentor, loving critic, or just a good friend).
5 Practice Deliberately
“Two hours per day if you want to stay the same. More if you want to get better.”

Glenn Michibata, former head coach, Men's Tennis, Princeton University
“Living in a cave doesn’t make you a geologist.”

“Better learners … consistently engaged in the five leadership practices more frequently than those in the low learning category.”

Lillas Marie Hatala and Barry Posner
Leadership & Organizational Development Journal

© James M. Kouzes & Barry Z. Posner. All Rights reserved.
“We argue that the differences between expert performers and normal adults reflect a life-long period of deliberate effort to improve performance in a specific domain.”

Deliberate Practice: Quality not Simply Quantity

• Setting specific goals
• Engaging in designed activities
• Getting immediate feedback
• Concentrating as much on technique as outcome
“Clearly, affirmatively, I can tell you that you will not get better if you do not follow up…. Nobody ever changed just by going to a training session. They got better doing what they learned.”

Cultivation Tip

*Foster the habit* at the end of each day to reflect and record:

1) What did I *do today* to improve so that I’m a *better* leader than I was yesterday?

2) What can I do *tomorrow* to *continue* my learning?”
In Summary
Become the Best Leader

1. Believe you can
2. Aspire to excel
3. Challenge yourself
4. Engage support
5. Practice deliberately
“... everything you need to be a successful leader you already have.”

Melissa Poe Hood
The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership®
Over 30 years of collecting data… around the question:

“Tell us about a time you were at your personal best as leader.

What were the key behaviors and actions you took in that instance that made a difference?”
✓ Over 5,000 individual cases studies.
✓ Over 5 million survey respondents from all functions and levels.
✓ Global data from 72 countries.
✓ More than 700 research studies.
✓ Rigorous testing of reliability and validity of framework.
The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership®

- Model the Way
- Inspire a Shared Vision
- Challenge the Process
- Enable Others to Act
- Encourage the Heart

Copyright © 2015 by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. Please do not reproduce without express written permission.
“It matters not if the respondent is a lawyer or a mail clerk; an all-star center fielder or a bat boy…what matters is how they behave.”

Higher levels of employee engagement are directly related to how frequently leaders demonstrate each of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership.
What are people doing when using *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership*?
Clarify values by finding your voice and affirming shared values.

Set the example by aligning actions with shared values.
Q. What is the question most people want to ask a new leader?

A. Who are you?
“In order to become a leader...it’s important that I first define my values and my principles.”

Olivia Lai
Associate Product Strategist, Moody’s Analytics
“Knowing who I am has been enormously helpful in guiding me in making decisions about what I do and how I could do it.”

Spencer Clark
Chief Learning Officer, Cadence Design Systems
“When I got into this position, I had to figure out for myself, and within myself, what I thought was important and why.”

“Then I needed to make certain that what I was doing was consistent with these values and standards.”

Jason Ting
High School Student
If you read 5,000 books this Fall I’ll spend the weekend up on the roof!

“I was so happy that kept his promise,” Esther Zamora, 8, said, as she stared up wide-eyed at Kramer, equipped with a tent, lawn chair and some favorite books.

“It’s pretty funny,” said Joseph Knight, 10. “But it would be funnier if it rained.”
“The model we set with our actions is far more powerful than anything we say!”

Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner
Authors, The Leadership Challenge
Please clap your hands.

Let’s see if I can lead the whole group to clap together in perfect unison:

“I’ll count to three, and RIGHT on three, you clap.”
TO REPEAT:
“The model we set with our actions is far more powerful than anything we say!”

Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner
Authors, The Leadership Challenge
Envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities.

Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.
Q. What is the second question most people want to ask a new leader?

A. Where are we going?
“Vision trumps everything. Organizations are most effective when a well-articulated and ambitious vision of the future exists.”

Nancy Zimpher
Chancellor of the State University of New York
What’s it like to drive in the fog?
“But that’s what leadership is for — to look at the chaos and provide a point of view about what needs to be done.”

James P. Hackett
President/CEO, Steelcase
“It is important to keep the big picture in mind because you can help the group when they hit an obstacle or get hung up on details.”

Christine Mielke
Owner/Editor, Temptalia
What kind of information do people want more of from their management?
1) Reliable information on where the organization is heading.

2) How my job fits into the total picture.
Search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and by looking outward for innovative ways to improve.

Experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from experience.
Is Challenge the Process for Leaders Optional or Required?

Instead of risking anything new, let’s play it safe by continuing our slow decline into obsolescence.
Justina Wang
Assistant General Manager, China Merchant Group

“Leadership is getting people to look beyond their own job descriptions for ways to improve and challenge the status quo.”
“I haven't failed. I've identified 10,000 ways that this doesn’t work.”

Thomas Edison
American Inventor and Businessman
No Mistakes = No Learning

“Leadership is learning by doing, adapting to actual situations. Leaders are constantly learning from their errors and failures.”

Claude Meyer
Head of Group ICT & Business at Hirslanden (Switzerland)
Where do new ideas come from?

“No great idea ever enters the mind through open mouth.”
Innovation requires **outsight**, not just insight.
Leaders Bring Out Sight

- Being open
- Staying in touch
- Stepping outside boundaries
Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships.

Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence.
“No matter how capable a leader is, he or she *alone* won’t be able to deliver …without the joint efforts that comes from *the team*.”

Eric Pan, Regional Head, Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (South China)
“I learned that leadership is the ability to help others achieve their personal best, and through their personal best, each person helps contribute to the team’s success.”

Eddie Tai
Sr. Project Manager at Taitech Logistics
When was the last time you washed a rental car?
OKAY, TROOPS, GATHER 'ROUND!

WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

WHO IS IT?!
IT'S ME! I'M THE LEADER SO I GET MY PICTURE ON THE FLAG!
ALL RIGHT, DOES ANYONE HAVE A BETTER IDEA?
“Okay, what do you need from me so that you can completely rock at what you're doing?”

Celia Hodson
CEO, School for Social Entrepreneurs (Australia)
“Celia’s best leadership quality is her ability to **empower** those around her with a **sense of ownership**. Two phrases we hear from her a lot are, ‘Own your project,’ and ‘Own it, baby!’ ”

Sally McGeoch
The “shut off the noise button” experiment
Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence.

Celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.
Which is the right question?

1. Do you *need encouragement* to perform your best?

2. When you *get encouragement* does it *help stimulate and sustain* your performance?
“They want to know that I value them. That I think they are doing a great job. And that I am not taking their contribution for granted.”

Jane Binger
Executive Director, Sutter Research Enterprise
“When people are down and demoralized they need to be picked up and encouraged. Showing that you care about someone is a simple yet overlooked quality of a leader.”

Keon Yang Kim
CEO, Pizza Hut (South Korea)
Positive to Negative Ratio

Is there a relationship between positive to negative (verbal and nonverbal) feedback?

What is that ratio?
“Effectiveness” was measured according to financial performance, customer satisfaction ratings, and 360-degree feedback ratings of the team members.

A little criticism goes a long way

Top performing teams give each other more than five positive comments for every criticism.
“The first core truth about positive emotions is that they open our hearts and our minds, making us more receptive and more creative.”

Barbara Fredrickson
Professor, University of North Carolina and author, *Positivity*
“Keep up the good work, whatever it is, whoever you are.”

You have to be genuine!
“Good leaders know their people. When you truly know someone, you recognize them in a way that they personally value, because it's relevant to what they care about.”

Nathalie McNeil
HR Director, Novartis (Australia)
The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership®

* Model the Way
* Inspire a Shared Vision
* Challenge the Process
* Enable Others to Act
* Encourage the Heart
“The secret to success in life!”

John Stanford
U.S. Army Major General
Fulton County (Atlanta, GA) Executive
Seattle Schools Superintendent
For more information about *The Leadership Challenge*, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner visit:

www.theleadershipchallenge.com