



BOARDROOM STRATEGY

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To find yourself as a leader, you need to start with the right directions

Here's a question I get asked fairly often: how can I move from being a manager to truly becoming a leader?

It turns out that the answer is it's a journey, one you can start right now and you need to be strategic about it.

Like most journeys, the one from manager to leader becomes more focused with a roadmap that guides you in knowing if you're on track and making progress.

Here's a step-by-step process for helping you create your own development strategy as a leader.

Step 1: Understand the perception of followers. One perspective on the difference between managers and leaders is that managers manage tasks and projects while leaders inspire, guide, mentor and coach their teams. The reality is that the key difference is in the followers. The perception of followers plays a big role in

developing you as a leader: if followers aren't willing to be led then you will have no one to lead. This understanding is the first step.

Step 2: Clarify your leadership vision. Once you understand the role perception management plays in leadership, it's time to consider what leadership outcome you are striving to achieve. Your leadership vision is the "what and where" of your leadership journey: where do you want to end up and what will you do when you get there? As the Cheshire Cat said to Alice, "If you don't know where you're going then any road will take you there!" Your leadership vision can be a role or position within an organization or it can be what you will be able to accomplish as a result of your leadership journey.

Step 3: Clarify your leadership core purpose. Now that you have your vision – your

"what and where" – it's time to consider the how. Your leadership core purpose is made up of the underlying values, attitudes and beliefs that drive your behaviours and actions toward your leadership vision. To help you determine your leadership core purpose, ask yourself, "If I asked my followers how they would describe my strengths as a leader, what would they say?"

Step 4: Evaluate your leadership competencies. Now that you're clear on your destination and have an idea about how you're going to get there, take a step back and understand where you are today. Draw a line down the centre of a blank page and on the left side write a list of your leadership strengths, both behavioural and skill/role-related. On the right side of the page write a list of the areas you need to get stronger at that are consistent with your vision and core purpose.

Step 5: Determine the actions that will increase your competency and maximize strengths. Next to each leadership strength and area that requires improvement, write a clear and direct action that you can take this year to improve in these areas and move you toward your leadership vision.

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These actions can vary from reading, to taking courses, attending webinars, joining peer-groups, getting coaching, finding a mentor, signing up for internal leadership development program, finding opportunities to take on leadership roles out-

side of work (in my experience chairing a volunteer board is an amazing way to develop your leadership abilities), etc.

Step 6: Build in accountability. Now that you have actions set up, it's time to put some accountability into place. Create "by when" dates and first steps for each of the actions. Then select an accountability buddy who can hold you accountable to your leadership roadmap and provide feedback and shared experiences when you feel stuck or at a crossroads.

Step 7: Review, evaluate and revise. Each quarter set up a review, evaluate and revise a session for yourself to see what progress you've made, what's working, what's not working, what's missing and what you can celebrate.

After reading this you may be thinking that the journey of a leader is more than an

outer, visible journey; it's a blend of the outer and an inner journey. If you have read the autobiographies of great leaders you already know how much of their focus in becoming so was on self-reflection and discovery. This is the inner journey that is woven like a ribbon through your development as a leader. Think of it as your own personal iceberg: so much of the real weight is hidden below the surface and forms the true stability and power behind the mass. ■

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