

## Aspiring to Lead

It was a scene most adults have seen a thousand times. The restaurant was packed, the servers frenzied, and one family was unable to place the order because the child at the table wanted something the parents knew he would never finish eating. The old adage “your eyes are bigger than your stomach” was the lecture of the moment. And yet the child believed he would finish his dish. In fact he promised he would. Needless to say, they had quite a doggy bag that night. The temptation for some to lead is no less powerful than that little boy’s desire for the adult portion. And for some, the ability to lead is no more genuine than that boy’s capacity for food. And yet, everywhere we go there are inadequate leaders failing miserably at leading. Their “eye” for power is far bigger than their “stomach” to lead.

Tudog sees the appeal in leadership. There is certainly a higher level of reward that goes along with the role. So too is the ego better fed by the respect a leader may command and the authority he/she may have the power to yield. It makes sense to aspire to be a leader.

Except if you are lacking what it takes.

Bad leaders have it much worse than those who never rise to the role. True, the followers of bad leaders are not in for much of a picnic, but the leader him/herself is in for much more of a horrible time. First of all, the lousy leader loses the rewards he/she may have become accustomed to. Further the respect he/she relished has been replaced by ridicule and scorn. And the authority? Most people simply smirk when told by a lousy leader what to do.

What this all means is that one should not aspire to leadership unless one truly has the capacity to lead. It is not only unfair to those called upon to follow, but it is also a surefire way to make sure that you fail. Even if you have what it takes to partially lead, your weaknesses will ultimately expose themselves and you will be called upon to bear the consequences. Why put yourself through the rigors of responsibility and the prospect of failure just because your appetite is greater than skills?

All this is of course a bit tongue-in-cheek and a light way to suggest that the glories of leadership come with the tremendous risk associated with the need to constantly perform. When we look at leaders, we look at what they have achieved and we admire (and perhaps even envy) their accomplishments. What we don’t see is the heavy price they have had to pay to get where they are, and perhaps the equally heavy price they continue to pay to remain there.

If all of this hasn’t convinced you that maybe leadership isn’t all it’s cracked up to be, and despite the best faith effort to urge you otherwise, if you still want to be a leader, here’s what you have to do to get there:

### 1. Set Your Path

If you really want to lead you need to set up your path to the top spot. Most people who rise to the leadership position have held key roles prior to getting there. You need to determine which roles are necessary so that when the time comes and you are being considered for the top job, you will have all the requisite experiences. There is a good

chance that your candidacy will be enhanced by positions that include management, finance and marketing. The more you can show that the intricacies of the top job are not alien to you, the better off you'll be. So if you aspire to the top job, make sure you select your career path carefully and make sure that the jobs you accept along the way are those that will serve you in your leadership capacity.

## 2. Understand What Leadership Is

Abraham Lincoln once said, "you cannot build character by taking away a man's independence and initiative". If leading for you is synonymous with being able to tell people what to do, you need to change the way you think. The task of leadership is combining the unique skills and thoughts of others and directing them into a cohesive set of ideas that share a commonality of purpose and direction. Your job is to provide vision and structure, to set guidelines and parameters.

## 3. Be Good

The word "good" has two meanings and if your aspiration is leadership you need to demonstrate and adhere to both. Meaning one is good as in behave yourself. Nothing will offset a rise to the top like a scandal or a pattern of poor behavior that can be seen as shedding light on your character or judgment. Meaning two is good as in excellent at what you do. You need to show that in any and every situation they thrust you into, you achieved the objective in a way that showed imagination, courage and will. You need to show that your commitment to excellence is brought by you to every task you encounter.

## 4. Get Things Done Right

Leaders are selected – and retained – because they get the job done and they get it done right. Right usually means in a way that is cost effective and efficient, without compromising any other values, like quality or reputation. If you are able to show that you can get things done right, and you can get others to fall into place behind you while you do it, you will most likely get noticed during a search for leaders.

## 5. Lead Boldly

One of the most important things a leader needs to do is make decisions. A leader frozen by indecision is not only ineffective, but also a traitor to his/her position. The decisions made must be well formulated, carefully calculated, and possible to implement. You need not be reckless in order to be bold. Every decision has elements of risk. You lead boldly when you decide a course and do all you can to make certain it was and remains the right path.

Leaders are special people. They take on responsibility because they seek the rewards that come with it. The role of leader is distinctive in that it comes with authority that is both legal and moral. When aspiring to leadership, the consequences of these mandates need to be considered. In the end, we only remember the leaders that were either great or disastrous. If you get to the top, make sure we'll keep thinking of you fondly.