

Chapter 1

Teachable Moments and Strategies for First- Time Leaders

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ABSTRACT

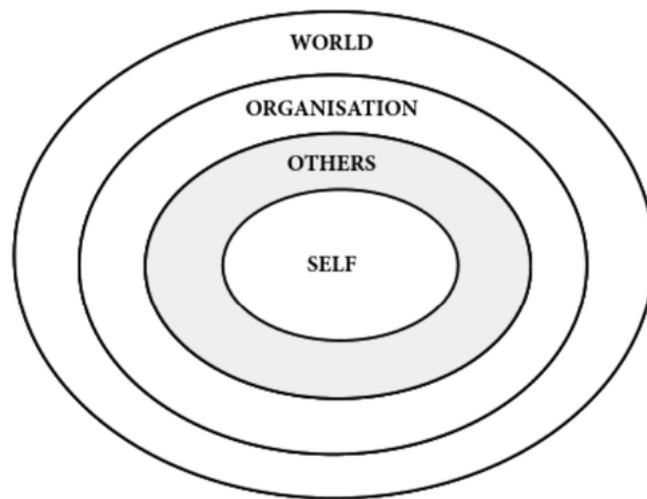
Leaders emerge from different levels of an organization. Some arise as young leaders, fresh from their educational journeys, while others are knowingly or unknowingly groomed and the right opportunity and time intersect for an appointment. There is no doubt that leaders can lead without an official title; however, once a title is given, much work is needed to excel and advance not only oneself but also the organization. Many leaders come into mid to high level positions with skills needed for the tasks at hand but lack various strategies to navigate the organizational landscape without burning bridges or falling into pitfalls. This chapter, per the authors, illustrates how true and effective leaders transition well into their new role or spaces, track the landscape by observing their environment, and prioritize the grooming, growing, and transformation of others to create more leaders. This chapter reveals teachable moments in the lives of others and strategies for first time leaders to adopt in order to grow as a leader and avoid missteps.

INTRODUCTION

So, you are a first-time leader and growth is inevitable. While leadership is a big undertaking, a leadership role does not mean that your learning ends. Learning is constant. You must exercise your learning skills as a leader by stretching your limits through recognition of boundaries, learning from others, and exercising discretion when flexing your leadership abilities. As a leader and learner, you must realize your work interactions, relationships, and experiences are not personal...they are professional. Employing the guidance offered below provides for the making of a great first-time leader.

Elkington (2018) imagined leadership as art where leaders are able to move with purpose through empathy. In this instance, leaders have the innate ability to take initiative and implement transformation within a group or organization. Laub (2018) asserted, with the right extent of vision and change, leadership can bring about a new reality. Thus, leadership is known as the capacity to apply vision to practice with the support of a team or organization through inspiration and motivation. Leaders' achievements are a result of personal characteristics such as transparency, positivity, and high-level of self-confidence (Wulffers, 2017). As a chain reaction, an employee's retention, job satisfaction, and commitment to an organization is based primarily on the impact of leadership (Almas, Chacón-Fuertes, & Pérez-Muñoz, 2020). For leaders, the constant pressure of holding a senior leadership position can inadvertently create an unwelcoming and hostile work environment for employees (Wulffers, 2017). Veldsman and Johnson (2017) stated a leader's success comes from the ability to connect, cultivate and continue critical relationships. This skillset starts with the leader focusing on themselves and at the center. The circle of relationships in leadership then moves to others, the organization, and beyond.

Figure 1. Four Relationships in Leadership



Recalling history, we can easily find leaders. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a GIANT of a leader. One without a path paved, Dr. King exuded confidence and learned great lessons coming into and navigating his leadership spaces. Many speak of Dr. King's dream and accolades but miss the extraordinary and life changing details of his journey. Dr. King was destined for his leadership role in America. It was in fact

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