

3 Personal Leadership Skills To Master On The Path To Achievement



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The first Personal Leadership skills I learned at the beginning of my career might surprise you—I didn't start with positive affirmations or glorifying work-life balance.

I started with daydreaming about what achievement really meant to me, because when I first started working I realized quickly that, despite the grueling hours, I didn't feel like I was achieving much of anything.

When I was 30 years old and in my first job, I came as close as I'd ever like to come to a mid-life crisis. I was *completely* overwhelmed. There were weeks I would work at my computer from 4 o'clock in the morning to 9 o'clock at night, in my pajamas, eating fast food, and drinking coffee all day long.

It was exhausting. It was stressful! No matter how hard I worked, I never felt I was getting ahead in my career. At the end of one day, I just sank into my chair, totally exasperated. I remember thinking to myself, "this is *not* the vision I have for my life."

So you know what I did? I put down all that work, I closed my eyes, and I **daydreamed**. I dreamed about what I wanted my life to be.

I wanted to have fun at work! I definitely wanted to *advance* in my career, and I wanted to make a difference. But if it wasn't too much to ask, I also wanted to enjoy my life along the way. That was the start of my journey. I believe I daydreamed my way into a new life.

Now, as an Executive Coach, I spend my days helping people achieve what they want to achieve and lead the lives they want to live. Across the board, I find leaders essentially asking the one question that keeps them up at night—and it's the same question for virtually everyone:

How?!

How do I reach my goals? How do I achieve my vision? How do I become the person I most want to be?

You may be asking yourself the same question.

The truth is, no one else will lead you to the kind of success you want, because you're the only one who knows what success means to you. You have to lead yourself. I call that "Personal Leadership." It's when you do what leaders do... for yourself.

Leaders define a compelling vision and inspire people to achieve it. Here, those inspired leaders are you! You consciously take on the role of a leader to define and achieve your own vision. Then you can lead yourself wherever you want.

Think about what you want for your career and your life and start to see yourself as the leader who will get you there. That's Personal Leadership—define and achieve your own vision, and then you can lead yourself wherever you want.

When you master the practice of Personal Leadership, you'll be inspired and reach higher goals, be happier at work and in your life, and, best of all, you'll make your life easier.

In my book, *The Inner Edge*, I describe 10 Practices of Personal Leadership. Taken together, they provide the Path to Achievement.

The first practice: get clear on your goals.

It's only possible to achieve what you want when you're clear about what it is you want. What do you want? Where do you see yourself? What do you secretly wish? Remember, this is your vision. It can be as big as you want.

A shortcut to finding clarity:

- Imagine your life just as you'd like it to be.
- What are some of the things you want?
- What would your life look like?
- See yourself there—where you've achieved that Big Goal—being who you secretly know you can be!
- See how clear you can get. That's important because that vision is your destination on the Path to Achievement.

This sort of visualization is very powerful. [Research](#) shows that people who visualize themselves meeting their goals are twice as confident that they'll achieve them. Your vision can be as big as you want because in your imagination you can let go of how you're going to achieve your dreams, and just see them.

Every time you start to doubt yourself, focus on that image. Soon it will become your reality, if you stay with it, keep leading yourself, and commit to continuing to Get Clarity.

The second practice is to leverage your strengths.

When you leverage your strengths, you do things *faster*, better, and more easily, because you're doing them in the way that comes naturally to you.

Ask yourself:

- What do you love to do?
- What do you want to do more of?
- What do you do so well that you do it willingly, even if no one else asks?

Maybe your strengths are technical, like engineering, coding, or solving a problem, or maybe they're conceptual, like inventing something new. It might help to ask other people what your strengths are, like your partner or your boss.

Once you discover your strengths, you'll be a lot happier if you do more of them in your daily life.

[Gallup reports](#) that people who focus on their strengths every day are 6x as likely to be engaged in their jobs and more than 3x as likely to report having an excellent quality of life.

If you can train yourself to look for opportunities to capitalize on your strengths, you will be one of only 25% of people who work in their "sweet spot."

The third practice is to live your values.

What motivates you and makes you happy? What fulfills you?

Your answer is the clue to your values. Living your values is both productive and rewarding, because you're doing things that matter to you. When you live out of synch with your values, you experience dissonance and stress. When you live in alignment with your values you experience harmony. And peace.

Do a quick scan. On balance, do you feel more stressed or more peaceful?

If the answer is stressed, think about how to bring into your life more of that thing that fulfills you.

If you're a person who values creativity, but you're too busy plowing through emails to be innovative, you're likely to feel boxed in. You can alleviate the stress by looking for where you can express your creativity.

If you're a person who values order, you're going to be out of sorts in a time of change. You can find peace by organizing your corner of the world or just ordering your thoughts, even if the world around you keeps changing.

It takes practice to identify and align yourself with your values. Remember: If you're going to be successful, you have to lead yourself. But, in the words of Lucille Ball, "That's a helluva start."

Leading yourself and aligning yourself with your values doesn't have to result in a complete career switch, or giving up your paycheck—take steps in phases, whatever you envision for yourself is possible.

So now you have some simple strategies for practicing Personal Leadership.

I say they're simple, but that doesn't mean they're easy. The process requires reflection and intention, but the "return on investment" can be astonishing.

Return to the questions above concerning finding clarity on what fulfills you, and how you can make that your mission. Remember what your life looked like? That will become your reality when you lead yourself.

Your life will feel transformed:

- Your work life: You'll invent something new, surpass your goals, or advance into a senior level of leadership.
- Your personal life: You'll be less stressed, enjoy your life more, have more time for the ones you love.

You can look forward to all of that when you practice Personal Leadership.

So, the next time you're thinking about your aspirations, imagine yourself as the leader. And use the practices of Personal Leadership. When you do, you will achieve what you want to achieve and lead the life you want to live.

So, what do you think?

What will the “daydream” of your success look, and feel, like? What fulfills you? What motivates you and makes you happy?

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