



Leadership – The Path Less Traveled

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Leadership – The Path Less Traveled

Introduction

Toastmaster International provides its members valuable personal development tools in the two tracks of the Toastmasters educational program – Communication and Leadership. Most members make use of the many tools provided in Communication track. Far fewer, however, use or are even aware of the ones provided in the Leadership track. Often, portions of the Leadership track are rushed through to meet a club's year end goal or to meet a member's forgotten HPL requirement for achieving DTM.

I often think of the Toastmasters educational tracks to different paths which brought me to where I am today and where I plan to be in the future. Along the way, I have met many Toastmasters on the Communication path but far fewer on the Leadership one. All too often I see members skip or take shortcuts around the Leadership path. My hope is that more will join me on the Leadership path and share in this valuable development experience. This presentation, *Leadership – The Path Less Traveled* is about the valuable leadership tools provided by Toastmasters International and how you can use them as resources in your personal and professional development.

Management vs. Leadership

Most books on leadership differentiate between managers and leaders. For example, in their book "Learning to Lead" authors Warren Bennis and Joan Goldsmith make some of the distinctions shown here between management and leadership.

Management is...

- Coping with complexity
- Planning and Budgeting
- Organizing and Staffing
- Controlling and Problem Solving
- Effective Action

Leadership is...

- Coping with and promoting change
- Setting a Direction
- Aligning People
- Motivating and Inspiring People
- Meaningful Action

Managing vs. Leading

They make similar distinctions between managing and leading.

Managing is about...

- Efficiency
- How
- Maintaining
- Systems, controls, procedures, policies and structure
- Doing Things Right

Leading is about...

- Effectiveness
- What and Why
- Developing
- Trust - *about people*
- Doing the Right Thing*

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Leader or Manager?

Most of us coming away from these books asking, “Am I a leader or a manager?” If you’re responsible for the performance of a group, you’re both!

You’re a leader-manager.

You don’t get a choice about whether you’re a leader or not. You’re a leader because that’s what the people who work for you expect you to be. They will look to you for purpose and direction.

Great leaders must also be great managers. Vision doesn't implement itself.

Sean Silverthorne, Editor *HBS Working Knowledge* (Harvard Business School)

The trick is to finding the balance between the two and developing skills that that you’re going to need to fill those roles effectively.

Key Leader-Manager Skills

Let’s look at some of key leader-manager skills you’ll need.

Listening

Listening is an important leadership skill. Good listening skills help you to acquire information, enable you to identify and clarify issues, resolve conflict and be creative. These skills also play a major role in team building.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is about how you approach problems, questions and issues. Successful leaders gather information, then analyze, interpret and understand it before acting. Critical thinkers question what they read and hear, then determine the quality of a piece of information and use logical reasoning to make conclusions. Because of this, critical thinkers make better decisions.

Providing Feedback

Team members need to know what they are doing well as well as when and how they can improve. Providing feedback correctly is a crucial leadership skill which, when done properly can relieve stress, improve interpersonal relationships and promote trust and respect for leaders and team members.

Time Management

Good time management skills are invaluable to leaders. Meetings, paperwork, crises – they all consume our time. Time management helps leaders make the most of the time available to them while leaving time for interruptions and unexpected tasks.

Planning and Implementation

Proper planning allows leaders to look beyond their everyday activities and think about what they want to happen in the future. This involves determining goals, establishing strategies, setting timetables and assigning responsibilities. A key part of the implementation process is involving team members to encourage their commitment.

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Organization and Delegation

Once planning is underway, organization and proper delegation are key to successful implementation. A leader is only one person and can only do the work of one person. An effective leader therefore relies on the efforts of a team to accomplish goals and objectives. Leaders must ensure that the team is organized and capable of accomplishing what has been delegated to them.

Facilitation

One role of a leader is that of facilitator. Simply gathering people into a team and expecting them to work together toward a common goal is not enough. A facilitator establishes the team structure, ensures that the structure is working and removes obstacles that may be impeding progress. A facilitator also resolves the conflicts that are inevitable any time two or more people are required to work together.

Motivation

One of the characteristics of a successful team is a high level of motivation. A motivated team will overcome obstacles of all types to achieve its goals. The ability to motivate people is one of the most valuable skills a leader can have. Although you can't force someone to be motivated, a leader creates and maintains an environment where team members are likely to become motivated. Because not all people are the same, a leader seeks to understand the differing needs of team members and tries to satisfy them.

Mentoring

Leaders need talented and experienced people to help with the challenges they face. When someone with the necessary skills is unavailable, an effective leader will turn to mentoring an existing team member. A mentor recognizes an individual with less experience who has potential, cultivates their talents, exposes them to experiences that will develop their skills and helps that person succeed.

Team Building

Rarely can one person cannot achieve and organizations mission and goals – it takes a team. Teams offer great benefits – members have a variety of knowledge and skills which results in more creativity and greater productivity. In building a team, the leader must focus less on what he or she can individually accomplish and more on how to empower others to contribute. The leader's role is to inspire while allowing team members to assume more responsibility, authority and autonomy.

So where can you go to learn and develop these skills? What better place than a Toastmasters meeting? As a Toastmaster, you have an impressive array of development tools and opportunities available to you. In fact, you should already be working with the manual which the proceeding information came from.

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Competent Leadership Manual

Since 2005, all new members have received this “*Practical Guide to Becoming a Better Leader.*” They and many older members are bringing the CL manual to meetings to be “evaluated” on their application of a specific leadership skill in an assigned meeting role.

Sadly, many are not taking full advantage of this valuable resource. They often arrive at a meeting, flip through the manual to find a project requirement which matches their assigned role and then ask another member to be their evaluator. The evaluator, in turn, makes a quick glance at the “Note to the Evaluator” and tries to answer the questions posed based on the member’s performance.

Sound familiar? Obviously, not much leadership development is happening when this is the case. In talking to other members about this, I’ve found that for many there’s confusion about how to use the manual or its actual purpose. They don’t see how just fulfilling an assigned meeting role especially ones such as Timer or Ah Counter equates to “becoming a leader.”

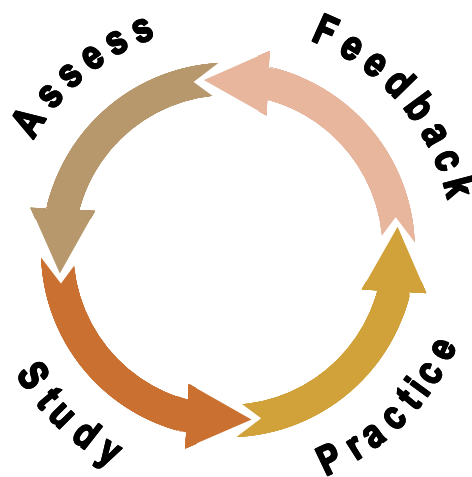
Honestly, they don’t. That is if you’re using the manual in the way I described. However, if you properly use the Competent Leadership manual, you’ll find that fulfilling even these lowly roles will contribute to your leadership development.

Let’s begin by looking at the process.

Competent Leadership - Four Step Process

Proper use of the Competent Leadership manual includes following the four step process show here:

1. Assess
2. Study
3. Practice
4. Feedback



We’ll look at each of these steps in turn.

Step 1 - Self Assessment

Each project provides you the opportunity to conduct a self assessment of your knowledge and current abilities in the specific skill being covered. Much as we use the Ice Breaker as a baseline of our beginning presentation skills, these self assessments provide a baseline of your leadership skills. They show you where you need improvement and provide a means to see your progress as you fulfill each of the associated roles.

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Step 2 - Study Skill Set

This is the step most often skipped. Some members give each topic a quick read through while others read the Executive Summary and skim through the remainder picking up highlights. To get the most out of the program, you need to actually study not just read or skim through the material. Take the time to go through the manual one project at a time from the start, taking notes and jotting down personal observations about the topic. Just study one project in a sitting with an eye towards your next assigned meeting role.

Step 3 - Practice Skill in Club Role

This is the step that gives you the opportunity to develop and practice the skill you've been studying. Using the "Practice in the Club" and "Evaluation Guide" sections of the project, think about how the skill can be applied to the role and how you can use it to develop in the areas of improvement you found through the assessment.

Remember, this preparation is in addition to the normal considerations for the meeting role. For example, as Table Topicsmaster, in addition to coming up with great topics, how will you use the role to improve your time management, planning or facilitation skills? As Ah Counter, how can you practice effective listening skills? As Timer, how can what you observe and report on improve be applied to your own time management skills?

Step 4 - Receive Evaluation

Just as effective evaluations of our speeches are integral to our development as speakers, meaningful evaluations of our application of a leadership skill in meeting roles is crucial to our leadership development. This requires the evaluator to understand the skill you are practicing and what your development goal is. If possible, get together with your evaluator before the meeting and discuss the assignment. As a side note, be sure to read the Evaluation Guide before you assume the meeting role so you understand the development criteria the evaluator is observing.

Repeat Process

The previous four steps should be used with every project. Also, to fully absorb the material covered, you should repeat the process when you use another meeting role to practice a previously studied skill. If you are using a different project in each meeting, it's a good idea to also revisit the self assessment as a refresher.

The assignments in the Competent Leadership manual also provide options outside of club meetings such as chairing a committee and working on the club newsletter or website. While most are not "required" assignments, they are excellent opportunities to further develop your leadership skills. In order to be better prepared, you should consider completing the first five projects before taking on one of these assignments. The initial projects will provide you the foundation needed to succeed in one of these more advanced roles.

Once you have completed all the assignments for a specific project, retake the self assessment and compare it to the baseline. You should see a level of improvement. If not, you may want to consider doing more than the minimum number of assignments for the project in question. Hopefully your goal is to develop leadership skills and not to simply be signed off on completing the Competent Leader requirements.

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High Performance Leadership

Another valuable development tool we can explore is the High Performance Leadership or HPL program. This is one of the best development tools you will find as it teaches you important leadership skills while you are leading an actual team.

Unfortunately, as with the Competent Leadership manual, the HPL is often misunderstood and not used to its fullest. All too often, it's the final requirement holding a member back from obtaining his or her DTM award so many rush through the project or skip steps. Worse, some members request and receive sign off for a project they completed before even reading the HPL materials. There's tendency to think a member shouldn't be held back from receiving their DTM when they've already "done the work" of an HPL project but didn't know that was what they were doing.

As with the CL, your goal is to develop leadership skills and not to simply be signed off on completing the High Performance Leadership requirements. If that's the case, you will gain the full benefit this valuable tool provides.

"HPL" - What Is It?

First it's a leadership development program in which you learn by doing. It provides instruction and practice in the following vital leadership skills and activities

- Developing a mission and vision
- Goal-setting and planning
- Identifying values
- Building a team

The program is centered on a project of your choosing which provides you with a leadership role. The project will be a practical workshop in which you learn leadership skills and put the skills into action. You receive ongoing feedback on your performance and progress from a Guidance Committee which you have recruited.

The High Performance Leadership program is part of the path to achieving Distinguished Toastmaster recognition. HPL is an Advanced Leader Silver goal and upon its completion, you receive the Leadership Excellence Award.

HPL's Five Part Program

The High Performance Leadership program is made up of the five parts shown here.

- Learning About Leadership
- Choosing Your Objectives
- Winning Commitment
- Working the Plan
- Analyzing and Presenting Your Results

Each part of the program includes a three step learning process. First you study related material. Next you perform an action of some kind, either by yourself or with your team. Finally you meet with your Guidance Committee to report on your progress and receive valuable feedback.

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Dimensions of Leadership

Within the program, you learn and practice the six dimensions of service leadership shown here.

- Vision and Values
- Direction
- Persuasion
- Support
- Development
- Appreciation

When you begin the program, you assess your current leadership skills in each of these areas and plot the results to create *Your Leadership Profile*. Later you will take the same self assessment and compare your results after some leadership development and experience with that of your initial perception.

It's Not Easy!

The High Performance Leadership program was designed to challenge the member. It is not easily completed. The program manual says it best:

The projects require considerable thought, preparation and time. The rewards you receive will depend upon the effort you expend. Complete each project to the best of your ability and challenge yourself to do even more.

Only when the participant has stretched to complete each project will learning take place.

Leadership Development Opportunities

In addition to the Competent Leadership and High Performance Leadership manuals, Toastmasters provides a number of other development tools and opportunities. The list of speech projects and workshops is quite extensive:

Related Advanced Communication Manuals

Essential

Interpersonal Communication
Facilitating Discussion
Persuasive Speaking

Helpful

Speeches by Management
Speaking To Inform
Public Relations

Leadership Excellence Series Manuals

The Visionary Leader
Developing a Mission
Values and Leadership
Goal Setting and Planning
Delegate To Empower
Building a Team

Giving Effective Feedback
The Leader As A Coach
Motivating People
Service and Leadership
Resolving Conflict

Success/Leadership Series Workshops

Characteristics of Effective Leaders
Developing Your Leadership Skills
Working in the Team Environment

How to Conduct Productive Meetings
Improving your Management Skills
Parliamentary Procedure in Action

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- ❑ Related Communication/Leadership Series Workshops
 - The Art of Effective Evaluation
 - Building Your Thinking Power
 - How to Listen Effectively
 - I: Mental Flexibility
 - II: The Power of Ideas

Completion of the projects in these manuals can all be applied towards a Communication or Leadership award goal within the Toastmasters program. An Education Program Summary of the award goals is provided on the last page.

Are You Ready to Take the Path Less Traveled?

There's no better way to develop leadership skills than to actually take on a leadership role. A great place to start is within your club as a club officer. Every one of the seven club officer roles provides an opportunity to develop different leadership skills. There are also committee chair opportunities within you club, area, division and district. The committee chair role is an excellent choice for High Performance Leadership project.

Lastly, every district needs members who are ready to accept a leadership role as area governor. This rewarding role will provide you many opportunities to develop and practice every one of the leadership skills covered in the Toastmasters Leadership development program.

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Education Program Summary	
Communication Track	Leadership Track
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Competent Communicator (CC)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete Competent Communication manual 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Competent Leader (CL)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete Competent Leadership manual
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Advanced Communicator Bronze (ACB)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieve Competent Communicator (CC) or Competent Toastmaster (CTM) ▪ Complete two Advanced Communication manuals 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Advanced Leader Bronze (ALB)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieve Competent Leader (CL) ▪ Achieve Competent Communicator or Competent Toastmaster ▪ Serve as club officer (six month or greater term as President, VP Education, VP Membership, VP Public Relations, Secretary, Treasurer or Sergeant at Arms) ▪ Participate in Club Success Plan ▪ Attend Club Officer Training ▪ Conduct two programs from the Successful Club Series and/or the Leadership Excellence Series
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Advanced Communicator Silver (ACS)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieve Advanced Communicator Bronze (ACB) or Advanced Toastmaster Bronze (ATMB) ▪ Complete two additional Advanced Communication manuals ▪ Conduct two programs from the Better Speaker Series and/or the Successful Club Series programs 	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Advanced Communicator Gold (ACG)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieve Advanced Communicator Silver (ACS) or Advanced Toastmaster Silver (ATMS) ▪ Complete two additional Advanced Communication manuals ▪ Conduct a Success Leadership, Success Communication or Youth Leadership program. ▪ Coach a new member with his/her first three speeches. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Advanced Leader Silver (ALS)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieve Advanced Leader Bronze (ALB) or "old" Competent Leader (OCL) ▪ Serve as district officer (one year term as Area Governor, Division Governor, Treasurer, Secretary, Public Relations Officer, Lt. Governor Marketing, Lt. Governor Education & Training or District Governor) ▪ Complete the High Performance Leadership program (Leadership Excellence awarded) ▪ Serve as Club Sponsor, Club Mentor or Club Coach
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieved Advanced Communicator Gold (ACG) or Advanced Toastmaster Gold (ATMG) ▪ Achieve Advanced Leader Silver (ALS) or Advanced Leader (AL) 	