

Let's Be High Road Leaders!

The world, and our teams, want and need leaders that embrace and practice High Road Leadership, a leadership philosophy that emphasizes commitment to integrity, ethical decision-making, and values that include seeking out the best interest of others that we work with. It includes consistently taking the "high road" and doing what is right, even when it's difficult or doesn't personally help us. It goes beyond merely knowing what is right by consistently acting on values that help others. Here are ten keys to being High Road Leaders:

1) Live our values and lead with character. Good character is the foundation for long-term leadership success. We can be a person of character by clearly understanding our core values and ensuring our actions align with them, even in the face of adversity and challenges.

2) Increase self-awareness and emotional intelligence. We cannot lead others to higher ground if we don't know where we stand. We need to develop our self-awareness and emotional intelligence. How? Methods include soliciting input via confidential autonomous surveys, making time for personal reflection on how we are treating people, and empowering one or more advisors to give us candid feedback.

3) Practice accountability and transparency. We can hold ourselves to the standards and values we espouse. We can take responsibility for our words and actions. And we can model transparency by communicating openly and honestly and admitting our mistakes and rectifying when needed.

4) Be humble and grace oriented. We have all seen how the proverb that "pride goes before the fall" has proven true. As High Road leaders we want to be humble and recognize our own need for grace and extend grace to others. I'm not perfect, what about you? We all make mistakes at times and cultivating a climate of grace will help us and our teams thrive. We also should not hog the spotlight and draw attention to ourselves but look to give credit to others.

5) Show empathy and compassion. It is crucial for us to understand and appreciate the perspective of others and show empathy. Our team members appreciate it when we show them kindness and respect. Life can be tough, and showing compassion is a trait of a High Road leader.

6) Be a "giver," not merely a "taker." Winston Churchill said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." Anne Frank wrote, "No one has ever become poor by giving." We can choose to have a giving mindset focused on serving and adding value to others. How can we be givers to others? We can share our talents and help others develop theirs. We can give our time to help others and provide



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opportunities that help our team members - including beneficial work experiences (e.g., job shadowing, cross training, project and special assignments).

7) Don't hold grudges and seek retribution. As leaders we must always take the high road when others, intentionally or unintentionally, wrong us. Reality is that sometimes people will be negative towards us. But we can control how we respond. Newscaster David Brinkley wisely counseled, "A successful man is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks others have thrown at him."

8) Value people. John Maxwell wrote, "When you value all people, everybody wins." I believe that every person was created by God in his image and should be valued. Not everybody will share that belief, but we can all acknowledge that every person desires to feel valued and acknowledged.

9) Serve and add value to others. Martin Luther King said, "Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve." High Road leaders embrace the Servant Leadership philosophy, which says our role as leaders is to serve and add value to others-employees, customers, and other key stakeholders. If you think about the most respected and effective leaders you know, chances are they saw themselves as "serving leaders," not "self-serving leaders".

10) Be a "uniter" not a "divider". We need more leaders that unite versus dividing people, don't we? As High Road leaders we can work on being uniters by closing the gap between people and bringing them together. To do so we need to truly listen, find common ground, and avoid dehumanizing those we disagree with. We can show respect to everybody, and model how to disagree without being disagreeable.

(Editor's note: Wes Friesen is the author of the popular book, Your Team Can Soar! available from Xulonpress.com/book-store or Wesfriesen.com (under Book) or an online retailer. Email him at wesmfriesen@gmail.com or call 971-806-0812.)