

LEADING FROM WITHIN

by Greg Giesen



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Much like the lighthouse that provides guidance and direction for sea-bearing vessels, leaders must become the beacon of light in their own lives before they can effectively lead others.

As we have come to learn, true leadership is not about a title or a position in an organization. Nor is it about a person's genetic make-up, level of education or socio-economic status. Leadership is a way of being. Effective leaders are those who lead by a set of core values that reflect who they want to be in the world as well as the contribution that they want to make. These leaders show up in all endeavors as the same person guided by the same principles. They lead with integrity, passion and an unresolved commitment to making a difference in the lives of those they touch. This to me is truly leading from within. As author Kevin Cashman says in his book, *Leadership From The Inside Out*, "Who we are says as much about us as a leader as the act of leading itself."

The following steps are critical in leading from within:

1. Define It!

Leaders need to first identify their core values, purpose and *personal* leadership visions. These three components together form the road map which guide and direct leaders on a daily basis and in all facets of their lives. Once identified, leaders can then transform these foundational principles into their values, purpose and leadership visions at work.

2. Get Behind It!

The next step involves creating accountability and support around these important principles. To do this, it is critical for leaders to share their values, purpose and visions with those around them, whether at work or at home. By enrolling people in this process, leaders are able to not only create a support system for themselves, but also create a feedback loop that empowers people to let them know when they have gotten away from their visions.

3. Exemplify It!

It is vitally important for leaders' everyday actions to be in alignment with their values, purpose and personal leadership vision. Being inconsistent or "ho hum" about their vision will very quickly sabotage any previous efforts made towards self-improvement.

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Inconsistency can also breed distrust, both internally and externally. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for leaders to consistently show up as the person they have declared themselves to be.

4. Learn From It!

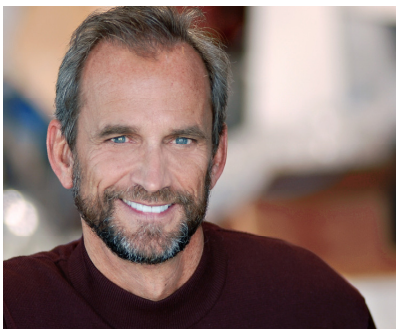
Leadership development is an ongoing process that involves a continuous improvement plan. Continuous improvement could involve seeking out feedback on a regular basis or taking skill-based classes and workshops. Leaders need to revisit their personal leadership vision bi-annually and make any necessary revisions. The point is that continuous improvement is a never-ending component of personal leadership. Remember, when leaders stop learning, they also stop growing.

5. Refine It!

Finally, leaders must hold themselves accountable. Since actions speak louder than words, it is essential for leaders to continually assess and reassess how they are showing up in the world to make sure they are in alignment with who they say they are. The following questions, if asked on a regular basis, should help.

1. If I was to die tomorrow, would I be remembered for the things I want to be remembered for?
2. How am I a better person today than I was a month ago?
3. What is the feedback in my life telling me about how I'm showing up in the world right now?

Leading from within is not about turning a switch on or off in order to show up as the leader you want to be. It's about leading your life authentically and purposefully in everything you do.



Greg Giesen is a professional speaker, management consultant, graduate professor at the University of Denver, facilitator of the award winning program, Leading From Within, and the author of, *Mondays At 3: A Story for Managers Learning to Lead*. Go to www.GregGiesen.com for more information.