



Building Leadership Clarity

9 Strategies for Accessing Your Full Leadership Capacity

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The starting point of all achievement is desire. This powerful reminder from legendary human development author Napoleon Hill is the perfect continuum from my last two leadership articles. It also represents a common theme among the many requests I've received recently to help leaders to lead with a higher level of clarity and purpose. In my January 2017 [One Question That Matters](#) article, I presented an expanded view of accountability that challenged each of us to see beyond the boundaries of outdated conventional thinking. In my October 2016 [Congruence Matters](#) article, I presented one of my most important learning discoveries of the previous 20 years. Specifically, that not only does leadership have little to do with job title but also that our capacity to demonstrate true leadership goes well beyond the parameters of the workplace.

While personal leadership was a central theme in both of my recent articles, the truth is that without a strong desire to improve as leaders, none of us can expect to recognize our full leadership capacity. It is

within this context that I present the following 9 Strategies for Accessing Your Full Leadership Capacity:

- 1. Define who you want to be as a leader and what others expect of you as a leader.**
A natural outcome of self-awareness is the clarity and resulting purpose that allows us to define, with great confidence, who we are and what we stand for both as leaders and as human beings. It also helps us to better understand and adapt to what is expected of us by our many stakeholders.
- 2. Examine and challenge your negative self-talk.**
Every human being at one time or another has struggled with self-doubt and the resulting negative self-talk that erodes clarity and confidence. This is part of the human experience and may not be a bad thing as long as we take time to examine, challenge and learn from the experience.

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3. **Look for more “role model” opportunities each day.**

Each of us is presented with countless opportunities each day to be positive role models both in and out of work. The key question, however, is what type of behavior are we role modeling? Is it really who we are? Is it congruent with our core values and who we want to be as a leader?

4. **Make an effort to shut-off the “auto pilot” and work hard at being fully present.**

To be sure, everyone is doing more with less these days and multi-tasking has become an expected skill. Often, these factors result in a level of distraction best described as “auto pilot” where we completely lose touch with the present. Beyond being an impediment to doing our best work, the auto-pilot mode greatly reduces our full capacity to lead.

5. **Count your blessings more often and develop a deeper sense of gratitude.**

In my first book, I introduced the story of my WMIS AM & FM discovery. The WMIS translated into What’s My Internal Screen which is a frame of reference as I awake each day. The AM represents the Appreciation Mode and the FM represents the Fear Mode. This framework allows us to examine our capacity to develop a deeper sense of gratitude while also helping to keep the negative self-talk in check.

6. **Keep a journal of your leadership journey.**

Contrary to some viewpoints, journaling does not have to follow a structured process or be filled with high content expectations. Some days my journal may have only one word written in but it’s a word that makes me think, and thinking is a key goal and benefit of the journaling process.

7. **Give yourself permission to develop your own leadership formula for work and life.**

Far too many leaders invest far too much time in trying to be someone else as a leader. While there is value in emulating successful leaders, the truth is that a great deal of leadership success is tied to one’s capacity to be authentic.

8. **Calibrate your compass every morning through 10 minutes of deliberate self-reflection.**

Not surprisingly, being able to achieve leadership congruence takes more than values clarity. It takes practice and daily calibrating of your morale compass. Some call it prayer, others meditation and still others call it self-reflection. Whatever you call it, taking 10 minutes every morning to refocus and recalibrate may be the most important 10 minutes of your day.

9. **Develop your emotional intelligence.**

Very few leaders fail for lack of IQ but many fail for lack of EQ. Emotional intelligence often referred to as EQ or EI may be the most important development opportunity available to leaders today. Unlike IQ which typically doesn’t change after adolescence, EQ is a learned intelligence which, over time and through learning and practice, can continue to increase well beyond age 60.

About David A. O’Brien:

David is President of WorkChoice Solutions, a trusted provider of leadership and team effectiveness training, coaching and consulting services founded in 2000. He works with a wide range of corporate, nonprofit and public sector clients to help bring about sustainable improvements in organizational effectiveness. His first book, *The Navigator’s Handbook, 101 Leadership Lessons for Work & Life* is available on-line and in bookstores nationwide. His second book, *The Navigator’s Compass 101 Steps Toward Leadership Excellence* was released in 2016 and is also available nationwide. To learn more about the scope of David’s work in helping leaders and teams to be more effective or to arrange for David to speak at your next conference or other special event, please visit WorkChoice Solutions on line at: www.workchoicesolutions.com or call him directly at 860.242.1070.

