

Timeless Transformations

Own Your Leadership

Guess what one of the most important qualities I wanted to instill in you three as you were growing up? There were many but up there at the top of the list was leadership. I started when you were young, modeling leadership and focusing on opportunities for you to learn leadership skills. I knew no matter how smart you were or how gorgeous you were or what you decided to do in your life, knowing how to lead people would carry you the furthest and give you the ability to make the greatest change. As I watched you go through high school, play sports, make your way through college, and now make life and career decisions, all three of you have exceeded my expectations in every way.

I've read just about every leadership book that's hit the press in the last 25 years. In my 35 year career, I've gone to countless leadership conferences and have heard some of the best leadership experts speak on leadership. You may remember that in the summer, I wrote about [Nitty Gritty Leadership](#). I believe at the heart of any positive change is leadership. My gift of inspiration today is on the subject of owning your leadership.

When you decide to kick your leadership up a notch, you step into ownership. You not only strive to accomplish great things, you think about how and why you're doing those things, as well as how doing those things makes you feel. Every task no matter how big or small is not just a goal. It's the journey towards achieving the goal. When you ***own your leadership*** you are a magnet and everything around you responds to you. If you are not excited about your current circumstances and success, take ownership right now and make these leadership transformations. Here is my top ten leadership strategies.

1. *Set a clear standard of excellence.* You have to know what this is for you. In my business it is this: Technology is ubiquitous. It has to be available, reliable, easy to use, and seamlessly integrated so all energy is focused on educating students. At home it is this: Be an empowering force for personal transformation through inspiration, relationships, health, wealth, service, and contributions. What is your clear standard of excellence? What is your point of reference that keeps you consistent in all circumstances? Your standard of excellence is what you believe in and it's why you do what you do. In good times and bad, in all success and failure, always come back to the center: your point of reference, your clear standard of excellence.
2. *Focus on values not behaviors.* In Dave Logan and John King's book on [Tribal Leadership](#), there is a chapter that talks about the most innovative organizations and what they do. They did extensive research and found distinguished organizations are not guided by behaviors. They are guided by their values and principles. For example in my department, I came in when I started the job with these values. Believe it or not, these were my values when I was at Unisys, before Goose Creek in 1994. I have carried these values forward in every organization that I have led. Just this week, one of my leaders didn't respond back to an e-mail that I sent him. I reminded him that one of our organization's core values was to be accessible, which means, "We as an organization value acknowledging all customer and employee communication within 24 hours." He quickly apologized and thanked me for the reminder. When you are trying to meet the highest standard of excellence and you are doing what hasn't been done before whether that be in technology or health or educating students, there isn't an instruction book. So your leadership may be the only thing that matters. You are guided by values and your behavior adjusts to meet whatever situation you find yourself in. That's the difference in real leadership. The people you lead are EVERYTHING. The better your people are the more impactful you will be.

Timeless Transformations

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3. *Work from the inside out.* Real leadership understands human nature. Most leaders work from the outside in. They focus on the external things about the organization. To make a radical change and make it stick, like changing the culture, you must work from the inside out. Focus on the individual and empower them to make a change. When you show up as the leader, you exemplify the standard of excellence. Your external environment will always match your internal reality. Your environment supports what you are trying to accomplish. This in turn creates a success.
4. *Connect and extend the team.* Average leaders focus on individual behaviors. Employees working on a team are not independent. You must inspire connectedness and extension. Recognize that the interconnectedness of your team is your greatest asset. Each person is an extension of the other. Each person has a place on the team and a specific responsibility. Without each person on the team, the team falls apart. Interdependence is the linkage that strengthens your team.
5. *Inspire an achieving standard of performance.* Act like you already have succeeded. True leaders inspire the team to act like winners before they start winning no matter what their situation is. How would you change if you made decisions today as if you were already the person you want to be tomorrow? We live up to our beliefs about ourselves and our teams for better or for worse. You three all played team sports. Great teams act like they are winners before they start winning. We grow into our mindset. When you step in as the leader with inspiration of achievement, everyone around you starts looking toward success. When you believe it is possible, everyone else on your team will believe it. It all starts with you.
6. *Get into the trenches when it counts.* If you expect your team to work hard and produce transformational work, there may be times you're going to need to get into the trenches. There is no greater motivation than seeing a leader work alongside everyone else, showing that hard work is being done on every level. For example, I plan to work the week after Christmas. I plan to work alongside the network engineering team to rip out all of the old network electronics in our administrative facility and install new ones. It's a two day job and it will be messy in the trenches but this demonstrates my commitment. When your team sees your hardworking, positive energy, you earn their respect. When you focus on perfecting your performance, success takes care of itself. Success becomes a consequence of who you are and your leadership.
7. *Be consistent in chaos.* Consistent effort is a consistent challenge. This seems small but it's not. When you are the leader, your attitude and behavior must be a constant force on the team regardless of success or failure. Many real leaders lack this quality. Most are on a behavioral roller-coaster and fluctuate depending on external circumstances. How many times have you seen it? When things aren't going well, leaders are overwhelmed and stressed out. When things are going well, they're overconfident and complacent. Lead as if everything on the outside of you is noise. You march to the beat of your own drum, moving forward by your visionary leadership values. When you are consistent you reflect your commitment to your performance standard.

Timeless Transformations

Own Your Leadership

8. *The buck stops with you.* Your failure to get to the next level hinders everyone relying on you. You can't take people beyond where you currently are, personally and professionally. You reflect the standard of excellence. If your leadership falters, the team falls apart. Once you accept that reality and accept it, your priorities become crystal clear. You are the example of what peak performance looks like. You are the standard of excellence for others to emulate. When you reflect your vision and values, your performance will be represented by those following you, whether good or bad.

9. *Be accountable for your performance.* "Where performance is measured, performance improves. Where performance is measured and reported, the rate of improvement accelerates." — Thomas S. Monson. As the leader, you have to know what success looks like for you. What do you need to do? How do you determine if you are successful? Knowing what you should be doing isn't enough. You have to put measurements in place and instill accountability in yourself and your team. When part of your leadership strategy includes reporting your progress, especially to someone that you respect, your performance will improve. So will your team's performance when they report their progress to you.

10. *Respond to failure as success.* If you are leading you are taking risks. Where there are risks there will be disappointment when things don't go as planned. There will be failure. How you respond to failure, disappointment, or stress says more about your character than any other time. It may be hard to pick yourself back up. At every moment, the past is behind you. This moment is the moment that matters and it's this moment that is going to make you.

Taking ownership for your leadership defines how successful you are and those around you are. Where this is limited success, there is little ownership and minimal leadership – no matter what part of your life you are dealing with. There are few people or even leaders that do some of the most common sense things:

- Who genuinely stand for something
- Who set clear standards for excellence and enthusiastically reflect those standards
- Who are willing to put everything on the line for what they believe in
- Who create change and lead
- Who craft a following of inspired people that accomplish great things

Until you **own your leadership**, nothing will change. Be 100% determined to be the best you possibly can. The better you become the more clearly you can help others get where they need to go, because you've been there yourself. The essence of true leadership is pure ownership. You're no longer doing it for yourself, but so you can take those you lead further. I've always treated our family like a team. My role as the Mother is to lead our family as far as I can in my lifetime so you can lead your family and your children further. I never underestimate the power of my leadership influence with you three and our family.

I love you more than my vision will ever see in my lifetime on earth – Love Mom!