

How Leaders Succeed—Overview

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In the last two **Leadersynth** articles from Roselle Leadership Strategies, we discussed Why Leaders Fail, and what your organization can do to minimize leader failure. In this new series of postings, we will take a closer look at what factors seem to be most correlated with leader success. That is, we will look at How Leaders Succeed.

It is true that successful leaders from multiple arenas engage in hundreds of obvious and subtle behaviors every day to be highly effective in their roles. However, our experience and examination of related research suggest that six components are absolutely essential. To be a successful LEADER, one must:

- **Learn**
- **Empower**
- **Achieve**
- **Direct**
- **En-spire**
- **Renew**

In this first of a seven-part series on how leaders succeed, we will define each of these components of successful leadership. Of course, it is possible to be a successful leader without some of these components. It is also possible to have all these components and still not succeed as a leader. However, leveraging most or all of these components will improve your chances significantly. And, the good news is that these are aspects that you can develop over time—you do not need to be born with them!

Learn. To be a learner is to be curious and open to new information. It involves the critical skills of insightful questioning and deep listening, as well as the objective of understanding fully. Encouraging others to share good and bad news is an important part of learning, as is conversing and reading broadly to understand the context of potential decisions and actions. Learning leaders provide a role model for continuously soliciting feedback, applying new learning, and improving themselves and the decisions they make.

Empower. People on your team and on your team's teams need to know the scope of their decision-making authority. As much as possible, successful leaders push decisions down and empower people at multiple levels to draw their own conclusions. This includes giving people the latitude for how they approach and implement the decisions, rather than outlining each step. Trusting others is the key to empowerment, and leaders who trust tend to cultivate trust throughout the organization. Bringing out the best in others, seeing things they do not see about themselves, and encouraging them to take risks are also part of this component.

Achieve. Attaining the promised results, on time and within budget, is a key attribute of successful leaders. This means getting results *through others*, not on your own or with little involvement of your team. Related aspects of achievement include: sense of urgency, strong drive for results, dependability to follow through on commitments, and celebration of successful outcomes. Achieving means developing and executing a plan of action with the input and help of others on the team.

Direct. This facet of leading involves the ability to provide direction for your part of the organization. That is, to cast a vision of where we need to be in three years, for example, and to develop a strategy for how to get there. It means involving your team in the creation of the vision and strategy, and then mobilizing them and others to move in the desired direction. It means being decisive and breaking deadlocks that threaten to undermine progress. This might also include influencing key stakeholders and helping overcome organizational obstacles.

En-spire. On the surface, this may appear to be a cheap way to correctly spell LEADER; in all honesty, that may have played a part in creating this new, hyphenated word! However, en-spire also combines the concepts of enthusiasm and inspiration, which are the key attributes of this component. Successful leaders have a way of generating hope, energy, and motivation in the hearts of their followers. Sometimes, they inspire them through their lofty ideas, the certainty of their convictions, or the courage they exhibit. Other times, they generate enthusiasm through the warmth and genuineness of their style, or their vibrant, contagious energy level. In one way or another, they en-spire people around them.

Renew. To renew is to look continuously for ways to improve, change, tweak, or innovate. Depending on their core personalities and abilities, leaders renew in a variety of ways. The similarity across this component is that they continue to look for paths toward improvement. They encourage this “looking with new eyes” in others by setting the expectation that the future of their team, department, or organization depends on generating new ideas and testing them. By far, the majority of innovations that organizations leverage to renew themselves are new applications or improvements of products or services they already provide to the marketplace.

These six components provide the map for where the next six **Leadersynth** articles will take us. With each new component in the coming months, we will dig more deeply into them and illustrate with stories from leaders with whom we have worked in our client organizations over the years. We hope you will find these new postings informative and motivating.

In fact, let us know if you have an example from your own leadership experience that you think illustrates one of these six successful leader components. We look forward to hearing from you!