LEADING THROUGH INFLUENCE:

Overcoming Common Challenges in Leadership
Leadership is complex and simple. It’s art and science.

You’re about to embark on a journey that will equip you to: **Lead Through Influence**.

We’re going to walk together through a process that will help you:
- Lead Through Influence Rather than Authority: Understand and Master Non-Hierarchical Styles of Leadership
- Strengthen Your Team Leadership Skills
- Leverage a Case Study Application of Alternate Leadership Strategies
- Understand Your Personal Leadership Strengths and Engage Them

**Getting Started**

*Lead Through Influence Rather than Authority: Understand and Master Non-Hierarchical Styles of Leadership*

**Action Step 1: Identify Challenges to Leading without Authority**

Some examples of non-hierarchical leadership are leading peer groups, influencing across functions, leading teams in which you participate and even leading up, influencing those in authority above you.

Having people follow your lead because you are influential and not because you’re the boss is part of the art of leadership. In some ways, being able to influence others when you are not in authority says more about your leadership skills than the title you hold.

Just because a person has a title doesn’t mean that person knows how to lead. Master the art of influence and you are likely to be a more successful leader than many of your bosses.

There are some **Common Challenges** to leading without authority.

**a. To state the obvious, you are not the boss and you’re not in control.**

It’s true that you may not have the title to just call the shots but it helps to remember that many of those who DO have the title are not in control either! Times have changed. Your success as a leader is wrapped up in your character, expertise, knowledge and relationships with others whether you have the title or not. Not being in charge can be a challenge but it doesn’t need to be a big one.

**b. Lack of Trust and Respect**

It is possible to lead a team or group of people even if they don’t trust and respect you but only if you are the boss and even then your days are numbered. People will not follow someone they don’t trust and respect for very long. Eventually, consciously or unconsciously people will stop following in a variety of ways. Work hard on being the person others can trust, respect and
depend on.

c. Lack of Understanding of the Language of Those You Wish to Influence and Lead
   Whether you are on a team or an individual contributor there is no substitute for knowing what’s important to the people around you. Learn how to speak their language first.
   • Listen for what’s important to them.
   • Watch to see how they interact with others.
   • Learn who they are, how they like to receive and how they prefer to participate.

   Learn their language. Then you can influence and lead.

Awareness

Action Step 2: Honestly Assess Your Leadership Style & Strength

Starting from the beginning is always a great idea. In addition, starting with the “end in mind”, as Stephen Covey used to say, is also very helpful. Given that you are the only person you can really control, and even that is tough sometimes, start with yourself.

Select a leadership assessment tool of your choice to determine the type of leader you tend to be. Here are a few tools you may consider using.

Each of us can lead in many ways but we all have a “default” leadership style. For example, some of us are more commanding and others are more collaborative.

Once you identify your style then get a gauge of your strength as a leader. For now, you can do this by looking at the people that are following you or influenced to move in your direction.
   • How many are there?
   • Are they the people you want to lead and influence?
   • How motivated, positive, solution oriented and successful in their roles are they?

   The answers to those questions will tell you a great deal about your strength and success as a leader.

Action Step 3: Honestly Assess Your Relationship Capital with Those You Wish to Lead

It’s true that people don’t need to love you to follow your lead. However, you do need a positive relationship for people to follow you long term, especially when things get tough.

We have all heard the statement, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Investing in your relationships with the people you wish to influence and lead is the first step. Ask yourself some questions.
   • How much have I invested in the people around me?
   • Have I made more deposits than withdrawals?
   • What’s my balance with each of them?
If you find that you have low levels of capital in any of your relationships, correct that. Start making investments in those relationships with time, interest, apology (if necessary) and support. Build up your capital.

**Action Step 4: Honestly Assess Your Team Leadership Skills and Actively Strengthen Them**

Skills and strengths are not the same thing. We all have strengths that are hard-wired. We have a base of strengths that have always been part of who we are. Skills are more about education, practice and experience.

**Education:** What is a TEAM anyway? It is NOT simply a group of individuals working together on some initiative. A team is a group of individuals working in concert with each other leveraging each contribution for maximum success. Team leadership incorporates group dynamics, skills identification, execution, productive conflict, motivation and appropriate reward. Strengthen your knowledge of these things and you’ll lead teams more effectively.

**Practice:** There is no substitute for practice. Employ your team leadership skills often. It doesn’t matter where as long as you practice leading people on a team. Apply what you learn as you learn. For example, you can volunteer to serve on the board or a committee of an association to which you belong. Get active and practice.

**Experience:** Practice makes perfect they say. Well, maybe we never get to be perfect but we sure can gain a ton of experience that makes us more successful with each new engagement. We practice, we learn, we adapt, we practice again, we learn, we adapt and on it goes. There is no other way to gain experience that will serve to transform you from novice to expert status in your own sphere of leadership.

**Questions to answer:**
- How much “real team leadership time” have you accumulated?
- How much have you invested in developing your team leadership skills through education, practice and experience?

To have great success as a team leader you need to invest in your skills and practice. This is especially true if you need to lead when you’re not in authority.

**A Case Study Application of Alternate Leadership Strategies: Leverage It**

The results of your leadership assessment can serve you very well when you leverage them into action.

Let’s take a look at a brief case study to demonstrate what that looks like.

Brandon is the global leader of a medium-sized manufacturing company. He has been with the
company for over 10 years and his first job was working on the line. He is currently working through the internal leadership foundation initiative. Brandon directly manages a team of around 10 regional leaders and leads a global project that involves people in six countries where he does not have direct authority. Brandon’s leadership style is usually to allow his managers to make most operational decisions. However, if an initiative or project is running behind or well over budget, Brandon may take control to ensure a prompt and coordinated response.

Some leadership approaches fall somewhere between autocratic and democratic. These styles allow team participation to a degree. However, the leader reserves the right to make the final decision. Leaders adopting an ‘I sell’ approach will try to persuade their teams to accept their viewpoint. Leaders that adopt an ‘I consult’ approach will seek the opinions of those they lead before making a decision. This is closer to a democratic style of leadership.

The best managers adopt leadership styles appropriate to the situation. Brandon’s preferred leadership style is to take a democratic approach. He consults widely before making decisions because he feels that his staff and the people on his project respond better to this approach. For example, when planning a major global raw materials inventory reduction he encouraged his managers to put forward ideas and develop plans. This increased team motivation and encouraged creativity. Some mistakes were made, but they were used as a learning experience.

However, as the global leader, Brandon deals with many different situations. Some may be business critical and it’s important that he responds to these in the most appropriate way. In those situations, Brandon may adapt his leadership approach and exert more authority. In the context of leading the global project where he does not have direct authority, Brandon influences those on the project with a “what’s in it for you” approach. He also invests in the relationships he has with each of them and their bosses. He seeks to be a proactive advocate for them.

You can see how important it will be to understand how to know your own leadership style and what alternates might be needed and/or appropriate.

**Application**

Questions to Answer:
- What are your leadership challenges?
- What might it cost you if you don’t address these challenges?
- What rewards will you enjoy when you overcome the challenges?
- How will you address these challenges?
- What kind of leader do you want to be?
• On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being 100% committed), how committed are you to becoming that leader?

• What techniques will you incorporate to become that leader?

• How will you leverage alternate leadership strategies?

**Action Step 5: Invest in some good tools like a Leadership 360 and Personality Type assessment/survey like RightPath 4 & 6 and apply what you learn about yourself in the following contexts.**

• Leadership
• General Communication
• Conflict Resolution

**Application**
Questions to Answer:
• Where are you using your strengths to excess?

• Where might you consider altering your approach to be more effective?

• What types of situations really need your skills – and how will you discover those situations?

• Where do you have blind spots and how will you help yourself see?

**Action Step 6: Declare Your Commitment**

We have given you much to consider and asked many questions to help you gain clarity.

The next step is to Commit to Making a Change. Declaring your commitment to becoming the leader you want to be is where real action begins. As you declare it to yourself and to the people around you, you invite people into making it become a reality.

This is not about some mystical expression. This is about rallying partners that are like-minded, supportive and who will become inspired as you start to become the best leader you can be. As you inspire others, you influence them in positive ways. You lead in a very real sense regardless of whether or not those people report to you.
Building Blocks of Leadership: A Final Word

The strength of your leadership at any given time will be equal to the strength of your foundation.

Our good friend Lee Ellis, co-founder of RightPath Resources, captured the building blocks of leadership in a concise and understandable way.

Here are the building blocks that form a great foundation.

- **Integrity**
  - You keep commitments
  - You share credit
  - You’re trustworthy
  - You always put people in your picture

- **Emotional Stability**
  - You recognize that you’re more than your job
  - You identify your areas of strength and areas of challenge
  - You seek out a trusted advisor
  - You are low maintenance (no tantrums, no manipulations, no power plays, no martyr complex and no prima donna)

- **Results & Relationship Orientation**
  - You know the goal
  - You communicate the goal
  - You use group accountability
  - You assume good intent
  - You trust your team

- **Competence: Leadership**
  - You know that the buck stops with you but you can’t make it alone
  - You know it’s not a popularity contest but there is a place for honey that attracts more flies
  - You know that if no one is following you, you’re not a leader

- **Competence: Job Knowledge**
  - You contribute the right skills on the team
  - You know your limitations and act accordingly

At this point you might be asking yourself this question.

“How am I going to work through all this and make some changes that last and serve me well?”

We can help! We have helped many leaders become the leaders they wanted to be and enjoy great success in their roles. We want to partner with you to create the success you want so much.

There you will find lots of great content to help you move forward and you’ll find the best ways to connect with us. In the meantime, our hope for you is that you’ll take everything we’ve provided and apply it to your success
Leslie Hayes, President, The Hayes Approach

Leslie is a Professional Coach, Workplace Educator, HR Consultant and Author with a degree in Psychology from Harvard University.

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Share your challenges or thoughts with Leslie at lhayes@thehayesapproach.com

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