

BUILD YOUR PERSONAL POWER BASE



30 TIPS TO BECOMING AN INFLUENTIAL LEADER IN YOUR WORLD

KENNETH E. DOWNER



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“Do the things that good leaders do, and you will start to be what a good leader is; be a good leader by doing what good leaders do.”

- Ken Downer

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Thank You!

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INTRODUCTION

I just did a search on Amazon for “leadership book.” You know how many results their web site coughed up? 184,211. That’s a lot of books on leadership. One hundred eighty four thousand, two hundred and eleven. By the time you read this, it’s probably even bigger.

The sheer magnitude of that number is enough to tell you something: there is no one good answer, no perfect system that will tell you all you need to know about leadership. There are plenty of opinions, but no one has cracked the code on what exactly leadership is or how to do it.

And one of the problems I have with a lot of those books is that they try to offer quick fixes; they immediately start to tell you how doing their one special trick or adopting their proprietary approach will instantly make you a respected and capable leader.

My experience is that those approaches don’t work and their initial focus is wrong. They might offer some very useful management techniques, but those don’t necessarily make you a better leader.

By Leader I mean a person you willingly and enthusiastically follow – not because you have to, but because you want to. You choose to follow them because you believe in them and their vision and what they are trying to do, and how what they are doing ties in to the kinds of things you believe in.

If that is the sort of person you aspire to be, here’s the first simple step in the process of getting there; realize this:

TIP #1

You have to learn to lead yourself before you can try to lead others.



You have to become the sort of person that others respect and believe in. Without that, all other attempts to become a good leader will be superficial at best. You might get others to follow you for a while, but it won't be true leadership. It won't be commitment, it will be convenience.

So we'll start this book out by taking a look at what kind of a person you need to be in order to become a good leader. You will find that as you begin to put some of these things in place, you will find that you are becoming an influencer, an informal leader without even really trying to.

Have you seen this compilation of quotes?

To do is to be. --Socrates

To be is to do. --Sartre

Do-be-do-be-do. --Sinatra

I think all three of them have it about right.

TIP #2

Do the things that good leaders do, and you will start to be what a good leader is; be a good leader by doing what good leaders do.



The mind will follow what the body starts. Doing is becoming. As you work on becoming a leader, you naturally find yourself doing what needs to be done; as you do those things, you become a good leader. It's a cycle that supports itself.

So we'll talk about what those things are that you can do, ways to improve your power and influence among the people that you work and live with, and set the foundation for you to become a good leader.

But before we get started, a couple cautions for you.

1. This is not a quick fix, success-in-one-week process. This stuff takes time. Leadership starts with you, but ends in the hearts and minds of the people around you, and it takes time for opinions and perceptions to change, to get others to believe in you. Think marathon, not sprint.

2. It is not easy. If it were, everyone would be a great leader and there wouldn't be all those books for sale on Amazon. It takes intention, effort, focus, and discipline to be a good leader. Be ready to do a little work, and a lot of it behind the scenes, not subject to public adulation. But in time, good things happen to those who are prepared and put in the work.

3. It is totally worth it. Once in a while, you will get that knowing look, or a quiet comment off to the side, or a simple thank you from someone that lets you know that you have had a real, positive, lasting impact on their lives. That's huge. In the end, that's what we are here for. And you are setting out on a path to get there.

I congratulate you on getting to this point and wish you the best as you undertake this journey.

If you do the things in this little eBook regularly, you will start to see a change. People will start to look at you differently, perceive you in a new light. Even before you are officially put in some sort of leadership position, you will become a leader, often without even realizing it.

Are you ready? Let's get to it!

LEADING YOURSELF



PART I:

Most powerful is he who has himself in his own power.
- Lucius Annaeus Seneca

People buy into the leader before they buy into the vision.
- John C. Maxwell



ARE LEADERS BORN?

“He’s a natural leader.” Ever heard that? Some people seem to think that great leaders have to be born with the right genes. But I don’t think that’s the case.

Here’s a metaphor that you might find useful: compare leadership to athletics, like running. Very few people are great runners – Olympic quality, world class. Can everybody reach that level? No, obviously not.

A while ago, someone asked a champion athlete what the most important thing to do to become great. His response? “Choose your parents wisely.”

To an extent, I think that may also be true of leadership. The greatest leaders seem to have a certain gift to lead, to read people and situations, to inspire with vision, to engage on a personal level and win wholehearted commitment. They are people that others seem to just naturally want to follow. They are world class.

But that doesn’t mean other people can’t lead. There isn’t only one great runner out there; there are many.

And whether you are concerned about running or leading, genetics is something you can’t change anyway, so there is no use in worrying about it. We all have the abilities and talents we are born with. What we can change is what we do with the gifts we have. That’s the thing to focus on.

TIP #3

Focus on what you can change, not on what you can't change.



You can wish all you want to be three inches taller, but that's a waste of effort; not much you can do about it. Better to look at something that you can change. One example might how you spend time.

You can choose to watch TV or play video games all day, and if you are happy where you are, that might be fine. But if you are looking for change, for improvement, to have an impact on your world, it's going to take a little effort. And I think you are probably capable of it.

“

“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”

- Leo Tolstoy

“

“I have no choice about whether or not I have Parkinson's. I have nothing but choices about how I react to it. In those choices, there's freedom to do a lot of things in areas that I wouldn't have otherwise found myself in.”

- Michael J. Fox



— YOU ARE CAPABLE OF GREAT CHANGE —

It doesn't happen overnight, either. Most worthwhile things take effort; you have to work at it. But if you consistently apply yourself over time, you will amaze yourself at the results. The thing is to set a goal, then take a reasonable, achievable step towards that goal every day. Over time, you will be amazed at what you can accomplish.

Here's a personal example. I'm not a great athlete, but I like to get in my exercise – it's good for being outside in the fresh air, helps my self-confidence, maintains my health, and keeps me balanced in life.

Over the last several years I had worked up to doing some long distance triathlons. I loved training and racing and was happy with the results, but in the process of training and racing, I had strained my Achilles tendon on my right leg – that long tough membrane that attaches the calf muscle to the heel – it's pretty important for running, as you might imagine. I had to stop running for a while. It was frustrating.

Nearly a year went by. In September of 2013 I was itching to race again and believed that I was mostly healed. So I started running again. One mile a day. Six days a week. At pretty much a shuffle pace. It seemed almost ridiculous – too easy, too short. Only six miles a week.

But I knew I had to ease into it, to grow gradually, to steadily increase a little bit at a time.

After a few weeks at one mile a day, I bumped it up to 1.5, then later 2. Winter came, the snow fell, but still I ran. Not always enthusiastically, but I made sure to get out the door every day. By spring I was up to four miles a day, 24 miles a week.

I started making every other day a longer run, building gradually to eight miles and doing a longer run on Saturdays up to 16, 18, 20 by the end of spring. I topped out at 42 miles a week (that's on top of a bunch of swimming and cycling).

I completed Ironman Texas in May with my second fastest marathon run time ever (the fastest one didn't involve a swim and bike warmup!). It felt great! It took eight months to go from zero miles to 26.2, but the payoff was wonderful.

On the long drive back to Pennsylvania, a thought popped into my head. I had a birthday coming up in November. Wouldn't it be kind of cool if I could run 50 miles in one day the month I turned 50 years old?

The more I thought about the idea, the more I liked it. I love a good challenge, but I had never run anything close to that distance. A marathon was tough enough; this was daunting.

How to prepare? I did what had worked well so far – I kept slowly adding distance and miles. Steadily, consistently, always putting in my time; mostly alone, out of the limelight.

Finally, on a cold November morning in 2014, I lined up with over 800 other characters at the JFK 50-Mile Trail Race in Maryland. The gun went off, and we took our first steps. It was 16 miles of hilly, rocky trail running, 26 miles of flat, winding canal pathway, and a final eight miles of rolling country roads. It took a while, a long while, and it wasn't easy, especially the last eight miles. Every section had its challenges. But I finished before the sun set, and dropped exhausted but happy onto the grass.

I had gone from zero miles to running 50 in one day in just a little over a year.

This isn't to try to impress you with an achievement. It's about trying to describe how incredible the human animal is, how adaptable, how resilient. We all have these qualities. I saw people out on that running trail that I would never have suspected to be long distance runners. I wouldn't have thought they could finish 10 miles, let alone 50. If we had met on the street, there would be no way to tell.

I don't mind telling you that some of those people who didn't look like great runners were passing me on those last eight miles of rolling countryside. Respect to them!

So you never know until you try. The real winners were every one of those people who woke up on that frosty morning last November, laced up their running shoes, and took a shot at it. They got out there, committed themselves to doing something, put in the time and the effort every day for weeks and months so that they would be ready when the test came.

TIP #4

Don't sell yourself short; you never know what you can do until you try. You can do more than you think you can.



I think the same goes for leadership. You don't really know until you give it a shot. And you can't always rely on the perceptions of others to give an accurate assessment of what your potential is. The only real way to be sure if you can do something or not is to get out there and try.

“

“It is not the critic who counts... The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who ... spends himself in a worthy cause.”

- Theodore Roosevelt

TIP #5

To improve at something, focus on making one small step forward every day.



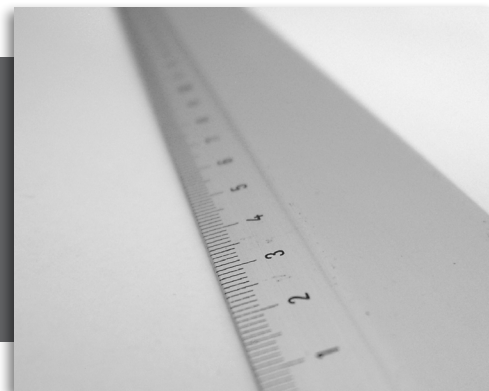
But you also don't run 50 miles on the first day. So you pick one thing, one small step that will get you closer to your goal and you do that. Run one mile. Do it today. Lace up your shoes and do it now. Tomorrow, run another one. The day after that – do it again. Soon you will find that you can do a little bit more. Be consistent, show up every day ready to put in the effort. You will be amazed at what you can do.

What's the takeaway here? You don't know until you try. As with running, you can always get better at leadership. Pick one thing to learn about and work on, then lace up your shoes and give it a try. Tomorrow, do it again. The day after that, add another little something.



TIP #6

Don't try to be the best in the world, just work on being a little better every day; you will be amazed at how far that approach will get you.



Will you be the next great leader of our generation? No, odds are that you probably won't. I think the greatest ones had a natural talent, a pre-disposition, and the formative environment that gave them great advantages. But they still had to work at becoming great.

Can you become a good, solid leader who is respected by his peers and able to get the job done through people? Absolutely. But it's going to take some work. We have to put in the miles every day. Are you ready to get started?

“

Example is Leadership. - Albert Schweitzer



SET THE FOUNDATION

“

“The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards they set for themselves.”

- Ray Kroc

OK, so everyone has the potential to become a good leader. Great. Where do you start?

The common question to ask is: What does it take to be a good leader? Maybe you have asked that question yourself. But it turns out you already know the answer. You already know because you can answer a different question: What are the characteristics of someone you would be willing to follow?

This is worth thinking about. Go ahead, take a minute, and write down the top five characteristics that to you would make someone worth following. Actually take the time and do this.

If it helps, imagine you are an employee in a business, and you were just put on a team with several others to work on a project. You are getting ready to go to the first meeting, where you will meet the person you will have to work directly for the next several months. What do you hope they will be like?

Write down your top five things:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Did you write down your answers? Wonder if they are correct?

OK, trick question. There is no right answer for everyone. Turns out there are lots of right answers. I hit a couple web sites looking for the definitive list of what qualities a good leader must have. This is a short list of the “must-have” leadership qualities that experts say you should have.

<i>Honest</i>	<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Focused</i>
<i>Trustworthy</i>	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Inspiring</i>
<i>Integrity</i>	<i>Passionate</i>	<i>Passionate</i>
<i>Character</i>	<i>Positive Attitude</i>	<i>Transparent</i>
<i>Knowledge</i>	<i>Problem-Solving</i>	<i>Accountable</i>
<i>Competence</i>	<i>Relatable</i>	<i>Innovative</i>
<i>Open-minded</i>	<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Likeable</i>
<i>Charisma</i>	<i>Confident</i>	<i>Dedicated</i>
<i>Commitment</i>	<i>Self-Disciplined</i>	<i>Supportive</i>
<i>Communicator</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>Consistent</i>
<i>Competent</i>	<i>Teachable</i>	<i>Optimistic</i>
<i>Courage</i>	<i>Visionary</i>	<i>Accountable</i>
<i>Discernment</i>	<i>Consistent</i>	<i>Example Setter</i>
<i>Focus</i>	<i>Humility</i>	
<i>Generosity</i>	<i>Decisive</i>	

That’s quite a list, and it took far longer to type it up than it did to research the words to put on it. All of them are right in some way. Odds are that your five traits are on this list somewhere.



HONESTY IS KING

Among the words on your list, if you are like many, honesty or trustworthiness was probably up near the top. So let's talk about that for a second.

In 2014, the **Pew Research Center** conducted a survey of 1,835 people. Not surprisingly, it found that fully 84% of the respondents believed that honesty was the most essential quality of a leader.

“

“The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office.”

- Dwight D. Eisenhower

TIP #7

The number one thing to begin with is to become trustworthy.



A synonym for honesty is trustworthy – the first of the twelve Boy Scout Laws. I don't think that was a coincidence.

“

“A Scout tells the truth. He is honest, and he keeps his promises. People can depend on him.”

- Excerpt from the BSA Handbook

People notice when you are honest with yourself and with others. It makes a big difference in how they see you, both as a person and as a potential leader.

“

“Honesty is the best policy.”

- Benjamin Franklin

One of those tough, everyday things I was talking about earlier was about being honest. Every day you will have to make choices. Sometimes those choices will be between taking the easy wrong or the difficult right.

A little lie or evasion of the truth could get you an advantage or prevent you from having to admit something uncomfortable. But every time you pick the easy wrong, you are digging a hole that will be hard to climb out of. You may not get caught right away, but eventually you will, and the damage will be done, trust is lost. Your quest to be a good leader will take a big hit. More importantly, people will lose respect for you.

TIP #8

*If in doubt about a decision or choice,
start with the truth and go from there.*



C.S. Lewis defined integrity as doing the right thing, even when no one is watching. That really gets to the core of it for me.

Not too long ago award-winning journalist Brian Williams was suspended from his job as an anchorman at NBC Nightly News. At the time, he was reportedly **making over \$10 million a year.**

It had become clear that he had embellished the truth in a number of stories. In particular, he claimed in 2015 that while riding in an Army Chinook helicopter in the 2003 Gulf War, he had been shot down. In truth, he had been in another helicopter at least 30 minutes behind. He was nowhere near being shot down himself.

A subsequent investigation revealed that he had made a number of similar embellishments to a variety of stories from his past. As the public became aware of his fabrications, his integrity came into question, and Williams had to step aside. He had lost the public confidence.

With everything else going for him, he had compromised the one thing that was most important: his integrity, and with it his ability to influence people; he couldn't be trusted.

In the same way, without the faith and confidence of his team, a leader cannot be effective.

“

“It is true that integrity alone won't make you a leader, but without integrity you will never be one.”

- Zig Ziglar



THE REST OF THE LIST

After honesty, what you chose to list as your other four qualities is probably pretty wide open.

If you don't like the person who is supposed to be your leader right now, it's likely you listed some things that are the opposite of what they represent.

Maybe you want someone who is open and receptive to your ideas and respects your knowledge and opinion. Maybe you want someone who is humble, not full of himself. Or empathetic, understanding. How about someone with vision – able to see the big picture and guide the team to getting there. Decisive? Sure; no need to wallow around indecisively when there is work to be done.

Depending on who you ask, there are anywhere from five to fifty or more “must-have” qualities to be a good leader. You saw the list. That's a lot.

“

“Moral authority comes from following universal and timeless principles like honesty, integrity, treating people with respect.”

- Stephen Covey

Really, when it comes down to it, only **you** can tell what will make you want to follow someone else. And you might not even know until you see or experience it.

I'm not sure a laundry list is what you need anyway. It's not as if all you need is the “golden checklist,” a clip board and a pen and you just start checking off each one as you achieve it. How would you know when you have achieved Integrity? Or Good Communication Skills? Or Decisiveness?

Besides that, we are talking about qualities, things you have more or less of. And how much you have can change over time and vary with the situation.

OK, so then what was the point of listing your top five? You had to think about it, and that will be important to you as you work to improve your leadership skills. You will be working on things that are important to you. Chances are that what you think is important in a leader is important to those around you as well.

So these are the five things to aim for.



START TO MAKE IT REAL

A good technique to improving yourself is to keep whatever goal you have foremost in your mind every day. Someone trying to lose weight might post a picture of a person with rock-hard abs on the refrigerator door; someone saving money for a car might put a photo of that BMW inside his wallet. Every time they see it, it reminds them of their goal, and helps them make the choice to not eat another piece of cheesecake or to refrain from buying yet another gadget they don't really need.

In the same way, if you want to develop some of those traits, put that list where you will see it every day. I'd humbly suggest you be sure to list Integrity at the top if you didn't already.

TIP #9

Write down your goals; it crystalizes them and creates a more lasting "contract" with yourself.



Now write out your list. Don't type and print. Take an actual pen and an actual 3x5 card and write it down. Then look up and write down the definition for each. A **1979 Harvard University Study** showed that the act of writing down your goals significantly increases your personal commitment and the likelihood that you achieve them.



TIP #10

Keep your goals foremost in your mind by putting them where you can see them every day.



Now put the card where you will see it every day. Refrigerator door, bathroom mirror, car visor, laptop screen, wallet or purse. Remember and memorize these traits. You should be able to repeat them by heart. Say them to yourself every morning out loud. Strange as it may seem, the acts of writing them down and saying them out loud will reinforce their importance to you and strengthen your conscious and subconscious commitment to acting on them.

Then what? Next time you have to make a decision, before you make your choice, stop. Take out the card, or repeat the list from memory to yourself, and ask, “what would a person with these traits do in this situation?” Let that be your guide.

TIP #11

Next time you have to decide something, check your list and make sure your choices reflect the qualities you seek.



Or if you have already made a decision and things aren't looking real great as a result, pull that card out again, and ask yourself the same question, "what would a person with these traits do in this situation?"

Maybe you had a sure-fire plan but it didn't work out after all, and you can't deliver something you promised; what would a person of integrity do? Let it slide and hope nobody notices? Or call the person you promised and tell them what is going on and what you are doing about it?

Let your little list guide your actions every day and you can't help but get better as a person. And as you do that, your potential as a leader grows.

“

“A person always doing his or her best becomes a natural leader, just by example.”

- Joe DiMaggio

DEVELOP YOUR PERSONAL POWER BASE



PART II:

The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.

- Alice Walker



SOURCES OF POWER

“Do it because I’m the boss and I said so.” Ever heard that one? That’s not leadership. That’s a lack of leadership. That’s someone in a position of leadership who has run out of other ways, better ways, to get people to do things. But he’s not leading. He’s fallen back on his last resort: the system that put him in that **position**, and now, since he’s run out of other ways to influence, he’s trying to use the system itself to get something done.

A lot of managers do this. And people will generally do what they are told to do. Because of the system. But that doesn’t mean they want to do it, or like to do it, or are interested in doing a good job. More likely the opposite if this is the approach they use.

What this manager is missing is a basic understanding of where his power and influence comes from.

TIP #12

To be influential, get your power from multiple sources.



Effective leaders are influential because they draw from several bases of power; they don’t rely solely on the power their position gives them. Social Scientists John French and Bertrand Raven identified **six bases of power** that make people influential.



THE SIX BASES OF POWER

Positional Powers. The first three are traditionally related to a formal position of power

- **Legitimate Power** – occupying a recognized position of authority such as “Manager” or “Supervisor” or “President”

“Do it because I said so.”

- **Reward Power** – able to compensate someone for complying

“Do it and I’ll give you something you want.”

- **Coercive Power** – able to threaten or force someone to comply

“Do it or I’ll punish you.”

Personal Powers. The last three are more related to the attributes that you as an individual might have, regardless of any formal position you might hold.

- **Information Power** – access to information sources that others may not have

“Do it because I know what’s going on”

- **Expertise Power** – having superior knowledge, experience or skill that others recognize.

“Do it because I know what I’m talking about”

- **Referent Power** – having personal appeal that makes others want to please and be like them.

“Do it because you like me”

As you prepare to become a leader, it can be very useful to understand a little bit about these sources of power and how you can become more influential by building your strengths in many of these areas.

Most writers start with the formal position of leadership and look at the powers it brings. But that could lead you to think that there is nothing to be done until you are actually in a leadership position; that you can't lead until you have a job title that empowers you to give raises, approve annual leave, or reprimand others.

Actually, I think the opposite is true. The best time to work on becoming a better leader is before you rise to a position of leadership. There are many things you can do right now to develop your base of power and influence regardless of your current position or situation.

That means starting with the Personal Powers: Information Power, Expert Power, and Referent power; and we'll take a look at your ability to apply Reward Power as well. By developing your strengths in these four areas, you will steadily become more and more influential, people will increasingly turn to you for your input and thoughts, and in the process of that happening, you will become a leader.



GET IN THE KNOW

Ask yourself, who are you going to follow? The person who knows what is going on or the one who doesn't? Easy answer. So how to you make yourself one of the people who knows? There are several ways.

“

“To be a leader, you have to make people want to follow you, and nobody wants to follow someone who doesn't know where he is going.”

- Joe Namath

TIP #13

If your group relies on information that comes from somewhere else, figure out how you can get connected to it, and plug in.



If there are key planning meetings where decisions are made, see if you can attend. If your group depends on other information sources that you can tap into, do that. Use the internet and other news venues to study up on current trends or happenings.

Look for ways to become better informed about your environment, your peers, the customer, the competition. The more current, relevant information you can tap into, the more useful you will be to your leader and your teammates.

Take Action: See if you can attend the next information or planning meeting, and sit in.

TIP #14

Get to know the people within your group; understand their skills, abilities, wants and needs.



Part of developing information power is getting a fuller understanding of your environment and the people in it. Engage with the people **in your group** and learn about them. What are they good at? What do they like to do? What are they worried about? As you get into touch with what is going on at a personal level on the team, you will begin to understand more about what your group can do, what its capabilities are, and the potential it has.

Take Action: Pick someone in your group and make a point to get to know them better; be friendly and sincere; find out their story, their skills, their plans, ask about their family. Try to remember what they tell you; write it down if necessary. Carve out some time to do this; one way is to simply arrive at the next meeting 10 minutes early and plan to talk to the next person who walks in.



TIP #15

Get to know people outside your group.



Engage with people **outside your group**. Everyone is always curious what the other groups are doing, so see if you can find out. Make friends with people in other groups in your organization or groups that your organization deals with. Find out what they are doing and how they are doing it. Maybe you can bring back some thoughts to share.

Make a point to get to know the customers, clients, or other people your group works with and find out what is on their minds and what their needs are. The more you know about the other people and groups in your environment, the more you will be able to contribute that information to helping your team grow, improve, and make good decisions.

Take Action: Pick someone outside your group – a customer, client, or someone in another part of your organization – who could help expand your understanding and knowledge; make a point to introduce yourself and get to know them. You might learn something, and you might make a friend in the process.

TIP #16

Study your environment, learn about developments and trends that affect your group, and share that information in a helpful way with your leader and team.



What are the latest market trends that are impacting your business? What new technologies are coming available that will make your team's work easier, or change it in some way? What about laws, policies, or pending decisions are out there that your team could take advantage of or will want to influence?

Ask yourself these kinds of questions, then look for answers. Potential sources are everywhere, from the internet to public meetings to studies, papers, and on-line forums. As you develop and share a deeper understanding of your operating environment and how it impacts your team, your information can help the team be successful, and enhance your standing within it.

Take Action: Make a list of the areas that could impact your team, pick one, research it, and share what you found out. Then do it again.

Personal Story.

During my Army training days long ago, we moved in small groups through the woods. The groups communicated among themselves and with the Headquarters via a bulky radio. The leader needed someone to carry this radio and stay close by him to ensure we had communication. Because it was heavy, awkward, and bulky, this was not a popular job.

But I found that when I carried it, I could learn what was going on both within our little group and with the other groups around us. I knew almost as much as the leader did, and sometimes more. I volunteered to carry it often.

Having that information helped me make good decisions and influence the group to be successful. If the leader was not available, my teammates would often ask me what was going on, and I could tell them. My knowledge made me valuable and influential.

How can you become the Radioman for your team?



BUILD EXPERTISE

People also want to follow someone who knows what he is doing – Expert Power. And you don't always have to be an out-and-out expert. You are the most expert if you know more about something than everyone else in the group. Here are a few ways you can do that.

“

“Knowledge is power.”

- Francis Bacon

Get experienced. People will naturally turn to those with the relevant experience or skill when taking on a new task.

TIP
#17

Do everything you can to gather relevant experiences that others don't have.



So do everything you can to be the person they turn to. Go on the outings, attend lots of events, go watch or help other groups do similar tasks. Learn what goes on, how the organization operates, and have experiences that the other members of your group don't have. You will become more expert on the functions and activities of the group as you participate. So volunteer, attend, do.

Take Action: Make yourself valuable by getting more experience. Make a list of the things your team does or will soon need to do, figure out how you can get early experience doing those things, then do it – sign up for

a class, ride along with another group, volunteer to help someone out – anything that will make you more experienced will make you more valuable and influential.

Personal Story.

A while ago I was stationed in Panama with a parachute unit. All of us had been to parachute school and knew the basics of the business. It's a complex and risky process to safely throw hundreds of people and equipment out of an airplane at night 1,000 feet above the jungle, but we were pretty good at it.

One day a new Lieutenant joined the unit. He was younger and less experienced than most of us, but he had a craving to learn and get better at the craft. So he threw himself into every aspect of parachuting that he could. He did everything his own unit did, and then he took some of his spare time and volunteered to help out other units. Sometimes it was the grunt work of helping make things go smoothly at the hanger. Sometimes he was helping the team on the Drop Zone guide in the air craft. Sometimes he was in the plane working with the air crew.

More than once, as many of us had finished our day and were headed home, we would see him heading down to the airfield to help out on another mission.

Soon, he had as much experience as we did, and not long after that, he had more. Though he was relatively junior in rank, more senior people began to ask him to help out and then to advise them. His expertise and experience was recognized; he was very good at it, and he soon had become very influential in what and how we did parachute operations, despite his lower rank.

TIP #18

Make yourself an expert by focused learning about your subject.



Study up. If your group focuses on a certain area, then take yourself to school and make yourself smart.

Next to actually getting out there and doing something, the next best way to gain expertise is to study up. There is so much available on the internet it's ridiculous. How-to videos, eBooks, blog sites, Wikipedia. It's not hard to get smart on just about any topic. And you would be surprised at how quickly you can get ahead. If you stick with it, your level of expertise will continue to grow and your ability to influence the group will grow with it.

Take Action: Sit down and write out a list of things that are important to the group you are in. Ask yourself what is it that the group could stand to have people who are more knowledgeable about.

Then pick one and decide to make yourself an expert. Not by just watching one video or reading one book. Use a variety of sources, gather several viewpoints. Understand the different schools of thought, the various methods, the pros and cons of different techniques.

Treat it like you are getting ready for an essay exam and you won't be able to look at your notes. Get the information in your head. Because when it is time to share, you want to be able to talk immediately and with confident authority.

Stick with this one subject for a while – become significantly more knowledgeable; become the authority. Then start sharing what you have learned as opportunities arise.

If you have been thorough and careful, and share your knowledge in a way that is focused on helping the group (as opposed to making you look like an expert), you will find your influence rapidly expanding in that area, your opinion will carry more weight, and you will earn the respect of your peers.

As you become more comfortable in that area, pick a new one, and repeat the process.



GIVE REWARDS

Think you have to be in a formal leadership position before you can start rewarding people for good behavior? Think again!

In a “legitimate” position of authority you have access to many tools that can be used as rewards. You can give time off, pay bonuses, control the work schedule, award plaques, give away certain privileges. But the reality is that you don’t have to wait until you are the manager before you can reward someone. You have the power to do so right now.

People like it when good things happen to them, so here are a couple ideas you can use right now.



TIP #19

Say “Thank you” often; do it while making eye contact and smiling.



People like to be appreciated, to feel that their efforts are noticed and valuable. Make it a habit every day to try and find something someone did that you thought was good, and find a way to make them feel good about it. Sometimes a sincere, “nice job on that, thanks” is all it takes

In his book ***The One Minute Manager***, Ken Blanchard talks about the “One Minute Praise” – it goes something like this:

1. Tell them specifically what you thought they did well.
2. Tell them how it made you feel and how it helps the team.
3. Pause a moment to let it sink in; make eye contact.
4. Tell them that you hope they will be able to do more of the same.
5. Shake hands or touch them in some appropriate way; this is a way of adding emphasis to your words and can become an unspoken agreement that they will continue to perform in the same way.

Take Action: Practice giving a one-minute praise and give one so somebody who is deserving; do it today.

TIP #20

Express your appreciation publicly.



This is a kind of social reward. If someone did something that impressed you or helped the group, tell them thanks, and do it publically.

You don't need a loudspeaker or large public forum. But in a small group setting, you can just casually mention that you thought someone did a good job at something. Be specific about what you thought was good, how you felt about it, how it helped the team. Be sincere.

"Hey, Carol – just wanted to say I thought your design ideas for the new campaign were really good. I was impressed by your attention to detail. I think your efforts are going to really make a difference for the campaign."

The only thing better than being shown appreciation is having it done in front of other people. It casts a positive light on them, and gives others a chance to echo the thought.

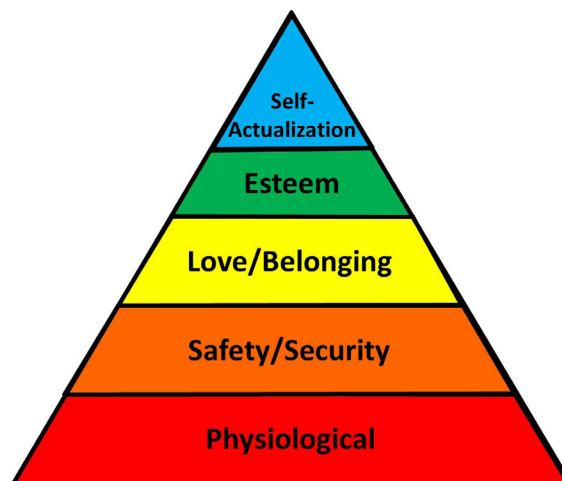
Take Action: Say something positive about someone else while in a group setting. Do it today; do it again tomorrow.

TIP #21

Look for ways to make people feel like they belong.



There's a thing called **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs** that's worth knowing about. Social Scientist Abraham Maslow found that there is a hierarchy to human needs; some things are more important to us than others. His list starts with the obvious essentials like air, water, food, shelter, and safety. But the next most important thing for people to have is a sense of belonging. So help people feel like they belong. It will go a long way.



“

“All good leaders are connectors. They relate well and make people feel confident about themselves and their leader.”

- John C. Maxwell

Take Action: Reach out to the new person in the group and help them feel comfortable. Get them introduced, find something in common with them. Help them get oriented. They will be grateful.

TIP #22

Give a simple gift occasionally.



Don't go crazy with this one or they might think you are trying to buy their friendship. But people like gifts, so give one. When someone on your team does something you like, get them a soda or a cup of coffee.

"Hey, I thought you did a great job on that presentation; nice work. Here, I got you a cup of coffee."

Imagine what that person probably feels like?

And keep in mind, it's not so much the value of the coffee, it's the idea that you made an effort to give them something they would appreciate; you took the time to think of them and then go get it for them – that is the actual gift you are giving. So keep the actual gift thoughtful and appropriate, but inexpensive. You are trying to show appreciation, not create a sense of indebtedness.

Take Action: Think of a couple simple rewards you could give, pick one, and plan to give it this week. Repeat next week.

Personal Story:

I lived with a small team in a desert environment for a while several years ago. It was always hot - scorching hot. We all knew it was important to drink water to stay hydrated, and we did our best. We always had water bottles near-by. Often the water in them grew as warm as the air around them; warm, tasteless, unappealing.

But one of the guys would frequently show up with extra bottles of water that he had put in the freezer overnight. Without a word, he would pass them out to everyone on the team, and we would enjoy the luxury of ice water for the next little while.

He didn't have to do this; I think it was his way of saying he valued us and was glad to be a part of our team. We valued him, too. Even without the ice water. But it didn't hurt, either!

You may not be in an official position to give formal rewards, but you still have the power to give. When you see people doing things you think are great, don't hesitate to show your appreciation.

“

“A leader is someone who helps improve the lives of other people or improve the system they live under.”

- Sam Houston





BE LIKEABLE

The five-dollar term for this one is “Referent Power.” It basically means that other people want to be like you. Someone with referent power is liked by his peers, they want to be like him and please him.

Part of this is charisma and personality, but it starts with the basics of behavior and character. Here are several things you can do to make yourself likeable and build up your referent power.

TIP #23

Be worthy of trust.



Keep confidences, be loyal to your friends, don't talk about others behind their backs. If you don't have something positive to say about someone, try not to say anything at all. Return stuff you borrow, without having to be asked.

“

“Truth is powerful and it prevails.”

- Sojourner Truth

TIP #24

Don't sign up for something you can't deliver.



Make a point of keeping your word every time. It is easy to say yes to people; you want to please them, and there is a short term reward for saying yes.

But balance this against the long term damage if you don't follow through. You will be perceived as unreliable, lacking in judgement, and possibly deceitful.

Don't say yes just to say yes; only say yes if you mean it; only promise what you know you can deliver. That might actually mean saying no sometimes. That's OK. It might not make them happy, but tell them you would prefer to be honest with them now than risk disappointing them later.

“

“The art of leadership is saying no, not saying yes. It is very easy to say yes.”
- Tony Blair

TIP #25

Be tactfully honest.



You need to be straight with everyone, but that doesn't mean that you barge into the room and tell the boss that you think his shirt is ugly and he's got it on inside-out. All you have done is embarrass him and give him a reason to dislike you.

Try a different approach. Get him aside at the first opportunity and let him know privately that his shirt is on wrong. He'll thank you for letting him know.

Your opinion about his choice of shirts may not really be relevant, so best to say nothing at all. But if you have to say something, be helpful and constructive about it.

TIP #26

Be respectful of everyone. Period.



Treating everyone respectfully as a person will make you likeable. Everyone has their differences, and the only person whose story you really know is your own.

Try not to make assumptions about others based on appearance; you don't know where they have been or what they have experienced. Take everyone at face value and proceed from the assumption that they are a reasonable human being who wants to belong, to matter, and to be accepted.

“

“In my walks, every man I meet is my superior in some way, and in that I learn from him.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

TIP #27

People like people who like them; express your like for your teammates by asking them about themselves.



Remember that part about getting to know people? If you are sincere when you do this, people will start to see you have a genuine interest in them. Everyone wants to be liked and accepted, and people love to talk about themselves.

The simple act of asking sincere questions about them and listening carefully to their answers signals that you like them. This will cause them to like you more in return.

Take Action: Pick someone on your team and try to get to know them better; ask about their interests, family, and experiences; listen carefully to their answers; give them a chance to talk about themselves.

TIP #28

Share what you know in a way that helps the team.



It's one thing to know a lot of stuff about a lot of things. That makes you smart. When you can share it in a helpful way with the group, that makes you a helper, an influencer.

The trick here is to do it in a way that benefits the group without coming off as a know-it-all. They have to believe it's not about you showing off your knowledge, but about trying to make things go better.

TIP #29

Look for ways to make other people look good.



We were leaving for summer camp last summer: ten cars full of Scouts and drivers, engines running, waiting for me to lead them out of the parking lot.

I'm about to get into my car when my friend Karl taps me on the shoulder and quietly hands me my knapsack. In the rush of things I had left it on the other side of the parking lot. Inside it was absolutely everything we needed to get checked in to camp. I was getting ready to drive two hours away and leave it behind in the parking lot.

But Karl saved me – he saw my mistake and fixed it for me. He didn't say a word, just handed me the knapsack. He saved me from the embarrassment of losing all that paper work, and he saved me from having to run all the way across the parking lot while more than 50 pairs of eyes watched.

I always knew Karl was a great guy. And that's how it works. People are grateful if you can save them some embarrassment or help them get the job done in a way that makes them look good (or keeps them from looking bad...).

I know Karl's got my back; I'll do my best to make sure I've got his.

Take Action: The next time you see a chance to make somebody look good, or prevent them from looking bad, do what you can to help them out.

TIP #30

Do something simple, unexpected, and nice for someone (without expectation that they will return the favor).



Ever been outside on a hot day and someone just unexpectedly hands you a cold water or icy Coke? Might not happen very often, but when it does, how does it make you feel? Good, right?

The world could use a few more people handing out cold water.

Why not be that person who gives out a nice cold drink unexpectedly once in a while? Or maybe you know someone who is looking for some answers: do a little looking on your internet search engine of choice and send them some ideas.

“

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

- Maya Angelou

Last week, without being asked, I cleaned and vacuumed the basement, then left to run errands. When my wife got home, she was surprised to discover what I had done, and sent me the sweetest text – you could tell it just brightened her day.

“

“No woman ever shot her husband while he was doing the dishes.”

- Earl Wilson

Take Action: Think of something simple and nice and unexpected you could do for someone; do it today. Tomorrow, pick a different person – wash, rinse, repeat. It’s a good habit to get into.



TIP #31

Make it your policy to under-promise and over-deliver.



Delivering on a promise is good business – you should definitely do that. But to really make an impression, look for opportunities to do more than they asked you for.

Think of the impact it would have if you were able to say words like these:

“I washed the car like you asked, and while I was at it, I went ahead and vacuumed inside too.”

“I got this project done a day early so you would have extra time to go over it before the big meeting.”

“You guys asked for coffee, but I went ahead and got a bunch of doughnuts, too.”

There’s nothing like delivering a little extra for the team to make you likeable. Do this frequently enough and you will develop a reputation as the person to get things done.

Take Action: The next time someone asks you to do something, do a little something extra to surprise them.

TIP #32

There's a complete list of these tips at the end of the book; print it off, put it somewhere you will see it, and pick at least one to do every day.



“

“I never thought in terms of being a leader. I thought very simply in terms of helping people.”

- John Hume



CONCLUSION

If you have developed the positive traits of a leader, you will find that people will respect you. As you develop your informal bases of power, you will naturally become more and more of an influencer in the process.

You don't have to have the "manger" name tag, or the corner office, or the clipboard and radio to start being a leader.

When it becomes obvious to the group that you are one of the best team players, most trusted, most experienced, the most dedicated to the goals of the group and the interests of its members, then you have become one of its leaders.

Keep it up and eventually you will find that formal leadership positions start becoming available to you. And when you do take on a formal leadership position, your life will be a whole lot easier because you already know how to be a leader – you have been doing it for a while.

I hope this book has been helpful to you. It doesn't promise overnight success, and you should be wary of anything that does. Nor does it say that the road will be smooth on your journey to leadership.

But if you are focused, apply yourself with discipline, and use the many tips here every day, you will find yourself closer and closer to being the leader you want to be.

32 TIPS FOR IMPROVED PERSONAL INFLUENCE

TIP #1: You have to learn to lead yourself before you try to lead others.

TIP #2: Do the things that good leaders do, and you will start to be what a good leader is; be a good leader by doing what good leaders do.

TIP #3: Focus on what you can change, not on what you can't change.

TIP #4: Don't sell yourself short; you never know what you can do until you try; you can do more than you think you can.

TIP #5: To improve at something, focus on making one small step forward every day.

TIP #6: Don't try to be the best in the world, just work on being a little better every day; you will be amazed at how far that approach will get you.

TIP #7: The number one thing to begin with is to become trustworthy

TIP #8: If in doubt about a decision or choice, start with the truth and go from there.

TIP #9: Write down your goals; it crystalizes them and creates a more lasting "contract" with yourself.

TIP #10: Keep your goals foremost in your mind by putting them where you can see them every day.

TIP #11: Next time you have to decide something, check your list and make sure your choices reflect the qualities you seek.

TIP #12: To be influential, get your power from multiple sources.

TIP #13: Get connected to internal information sources; if your group relies on information that comes from somewhere else, figure out how you can get connected to it, and plug in.

TIP #14: Get to know the people within your group; understand their skills, abilities, wants and needs.

TIP #15: Get to know people outside your group.

TIP #16: Study your environment, learn about developments and trends that affect your group, and share that information in a helpful way with your leader and team.

TIP #17: Do everything you can to gather relevant experiences that others don't have.

TIP #18: Make yourself an expert by focused learning about your subject.

TIP #19: Say "Thank you" often; do it while making eye contact and smiling.

TIP #20: Express your appreciation publicly.

TIP #21: Look for ways to make people feel like they belong.

TIP #22: Give a simple gift occasionally

TIP #23: Be worthy of trust.

TIP #24: Don't sign up for something you can't deliver.

TIP #25: Be tactfully honest.

TIP #26: Be respectful of everyone. Period.

TIP #27: People like people who like them; express your like for your teammates by asking them about themselves.

TIP #28: Share what you know in a way that helps the team.

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TIP #30: Do something simple, unexpected, and nice for someone (without expectation that they will return the favor).

TIP #31: Make it your policy to under-promise and over-deliver.

TIP #32: Print this list, put it somewhere you will see it, and pick at least one to do every day.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ken is a 26 year veteran of the United States Army Infantry. He has led groups of Soldiers ranging from 3 to 333 in all types of environments and is grateful for the many outstanding Soldiers he had the privilege to work with over the years.

He gives back by volunteering as Scoutmaster of a local Boy Scout troop where he enjoys teaching the next generation of leaders about the kinds of things in this book.

He is the founder of ***RapidStartLeadership.com***, which delivers practical leadership tips and techniques that help accelerate the leader to excellence.

Ken currently lives in central Pennsylvania with his wife of 22 years, and their two teenaged children.

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Thank You!