

Discovering Leadership Philosophies

We all have thoughts and ideas that influence every decision we make. They are values that are lived out.

Regardless of your position or title, I firmly believe that everyone needs a list of his or her leadership philosophies. These are the things that guide and direct your thinking, your interactions with people, and the way you handle your business.

It's important to remember that sometimes a leadership philosophy may actually be at odds with your personality. In fact, when you recognize weaknesses in your personality as they relate to leadership, having a philosophy that compensates for those weaknesses will be important.

Even if you have never written them down or given them much thought, you all have leadership philosophies. Getting them written down is important. It will give you confidence and certainty as you lead those you influence.

It will give those in your span of care clarity because they will better understand who you are, how you think, and how you lead.

When creating your philosophies, keep them simple. Use catchy phrases and words. They do not all have to be original to you. Ideas from previous leaders, your grandpa, your favorite movie all can work as a leadership philosophy.

Once you have created and documented some of your leadership philosophies, I encourage you to share them with your team. Walk them through your list and explain what you mean by each one.

Let me share some of my leadership philosophies with you. I will share the philosophy that appears on my list. Then I'll share the meaning behind it.

Before I launch into my partial list (I have 13 in total) here's a quote from Tony Dungy, Super Bowl-winning coach, in his book *The Mentor Leader*. This reminder is at the top of **my** list because everything else on my list needs to reflect it:

If we lose sight of people, we lose sight of the very purpose of Leadership.

1. Life is not fair - A simple statement, but one that is absolutely foundational to how I think. If I can remind myself of this, I will not get too excited or too upset when things do not go my way. This mentality comes from a foundation of faith I have had my whole life, yes. However, the deeply ingrained idea itself comes up almost daily when something happens that I do not like or when I feel slighted in some way. This does not mean I am a gloomy or negative person; it is just a constant reminder that gives me perspective.

2. People are weird - Like "life is not fair" this is another constant reminder and one I seem to repeat daily. It is the filter I use when my first reaction to someone else's comments or actions is to want to scratch my head or pull the hair out of my beard. Remembering that people are weird allows me to be patient when it wasn't my first instinct. It allows me to laugh when I want to scream or cry.

3. Hard on results, soft on people - What a great reminder when we are dealing with employees, customers, and vendors. We have no reason not to expect results, especially when we have hired correctly, trained well, and communicated effectively. But there is also no a reason to be unduly hard on people. Should we have high expectations? Should we hold people accountable? Absolutely. But we should do it in a way that is respectful and helps the person grow.

4. When you're a Jet, you're a Jet all the way - That is a quote from the musical West Side Story. It speaks to ownership of policy or decisions, even if we do not entirely agree. Behind closed doors, where there is time for discussion, we need to fight for what we believe is right and best for the organization. We need to communicate -- with conviction -- why we think we should or should not do something. But, once a decision is made, it is made. We need to step out of that room and own the decision like it was our idea. Saying things like, "Yeah, I know, but they decided..." will completely destroy an organization. We will lose credibility with not only our superiors but those under us.

5. Cleaning up vomit is the janitor's job - This may be one of my favorites. If you applied for and accepted the job of janitor, you cannot complain about cleaning up vomit. Why? Because it is part of your job! If you do not like it, then figure a better way to clean up vomit or find a different job. If you were hired as a cashier, you cannot complain about having to stand all day and deal with people and count money. This idea can apply to every position in your organization. If job descriptions are well written and expectations are clearly communicated before employment begins, we should all be very careful what we complain about.

Now it is your turn! Take some time to think that really effect you (positive and negative as a leader). This will give you some insight into some of your core philosophies.

Grab a piece of paper and jot down some of your Leadership Philosophies. Remember, you can add and change these at anytime. Don't get hung up on being perfect!

JUST GET STARTED!

Let's Connect:

Call / Text: 574.622.4737

Web: thinkleadlive.com

Email: connect@thinkleadlive.com



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