



# Leadership Skills 101:

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In the modern world, leadership has evolved from just being specifically for kings and rulers where it was more of an exercise of power and force, to an important skill for anyone looking to grow people around them as a team.

In recent times a lot of work and studies have been done on leadership qualities. Authors such as Daniel Goleman—a pioneer in emotional intelligence, have changed our perception of what leadership is. According to him leadership has more to do with having a vision as well as being able to motivate teams to work towards a common goal.

Leadership now has evolved into having democratic traits. This means the leader of the organization allows the team to grow and learn as well. A great leader might not necessarily have a show of power but his unique skill is in understanding human and social interactions and using it to move his team forward day in and day out in varying circumstances.

So what is this unique skill? How does one develop it?

To develop the ability to understand people requires a leader to be emotionally intelligent. The best part of this kind of intelligence is, it can be developed and learned like a skill, unlike IQ. Being emotionally intelligent means, understanding emotions of self and others, being able to communicate those emotions and manage them in a productive and positive way.

If we go deeper into this, we will find one word binding all of these together; that is communication. How we communicate with ourselves and with others; is how we show up in the world.

Fun fact: We don't just communicate with words, but with our whole body!

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If a leader is able to 'master' this skill, half the job is done. Here I will go on to explain a few tips which encompass effective communication with others. Remember the quality of; not just your leadership skills, but your life depends on the quality of your communication.

Here are a few tips to shift perspectives and help in developing a better communication style:

- 1. Everyone has their own map of the world:** This means we all have attached certain meanings to certain things according to our experiences through life. We create our own 'world model', which drives our behavior. Each of us will create a different map/model of the world around us. For some this world might come across as scary, as if everyone is out to get them. It's their experiences which have led them to believe this. Another perfect example of this is social media, where when one sees the profile of a friend with a lot of happy pictures.

We automatically assume they are having a ball of a time, while the reality might be quite different.



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Our maps can become obsolete with changing times and its best we are aware of this fact to be able to keep updating our software.

Being aware of this fact is especially helpful in understanding ones team members.

- 2. People do the best they can with the resources they have:** According to Dr. Brene Brown, a leadership expert and author, coming from the belief that people are doing their best is a vital leadership skill. This helps the leader to show kindness and respect to its people. It's a skill set not easy to learn but it definitely is a rewarding one.

Dr. Brené Brown writes that asking leaders to assume others are doing the best they can moves them from "pushing and grinding on the same issues" to the more difficult task of: teaching their team, reassessing their skill gaps, reassigning them, or letting them go. "It's a commitment to stop respecting and evaluating people based solely on what we think they should accomplish, and start respecting them for who they are, and holding them accountable for what they're actually doing," she says.

- 3. The meaning of your communication is the response you get:** The effectiveness of our communication is the response we elicit from the receiver. Interestingly, this puts the responsibility on us to make sure our message is understood and is aligned with the response we are seeking. Quite a shocking revelation, isn't it?

For example, if we ask a certain question from someone out of curiosity and care, but the other person responds by feeling pressured and defensive, then the meaning of our communication for that person was feeling pressured and defensive, regardless of what our intentions were. Hence it is important to know what we exactly want to communicate and be able to assess how the other person is responding to our messages. This brings me to our next point.

- 4. Observation:** This is a skill which enables one to be more aware of not just verbal patterns but also non-verbal cues. As mentioned earlier we don't just communicate through language but our body is also communicating. When you pay attention to the listener and their listening style you can become more aware of whether your message is going through or not.
- 5. Deep listening:** I once read somewhere "We don't listen to understand rather we listen to reply". Deep listening is probably the most basic of communication tools required yet, the most ignored and least developed in us. There is a difference between hearing someone and listening to them. It is a transformative tool and if practiced properly it allows us to develop our sense of observation and understand the other person. It means

we temporarily stop judging and become willing to receive information whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. Deep listening helps develop trust between two people. It allows the speaker to feel heard, understood and it cultivates an authentic connection. In today's fast paced world, building true deep connections has been the first one to take a fall. Deep listening helps rebuild it and as a result the quality of our relationships improves.

- 6. Rapport building:** Rapport is the ability to relate to others in a way that it creates trust and understanding. Ever wondered how we 'hit it off' with someone instantly or 'get on really well' without even trying? That is what rapport is.

Always remember "People like people who are like themselves". This is how friendships develop. We do it naturally all the time. Developing rapport is an essential part of every relationship. Without rapport, no relationship would flourish.

However, rapport can also be built and developed consciously by finding common ground and being empathic. This is where deep listening comes in!

As a skill, it means that you can build relationships faster, and improve communication more rapidly. Your working relationships will be more effective, and your personal relationships will be stronger as a result.

Establishing rapport at the beginning of a conversation will often make the outcome more positive. It is important to keep in mind the body language as well. We read (subconsciously) and instantly believe what the body language is telling us. Hence building rapport begins with displaying appropriate body language. For example, when a colleague comes in to discuss something be welcoming, relaxed and open.

It is also helpful to match words of the speaker. Reflecting back and clarifying what has been said are useful tactics. Not only will it confirm that you are listening (deep listening-mind you) but also give you opportunity to use the words and phrases of the other person. This will further emphasize similarity and common ground.

Communications is a field of study in itself, and these are just the tip of the iceberg but enough to make a considerable difference for those seeking a change. However, this change is deep enough to equip you to head out and lead your way; enriching your relationships and as a result enriching your life.

Don't worry if at first this seems a lot to absorb, some of the things we almost always do without realizing like building rapport; while others would need some practice. And practice brings perfection.



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