



## **The 11 Rules of Leadership**

Many ask if great leadership is inherited or learned behavior. I believe it is both. Leaders are indeed born, and they are made better through learning, practice, and trial. It is not possible to condense the principles of superior leadership into a single document, nor is such a document conceivable. However, it is possible to share best practices and lessons learned to advance collective understanding and application. These **11 Rules** were distilled from 30 years of successful military service, 20+ years in Command or CEO/COO equivalent positions. They comprise what worked well and what did not. I believe they are lessons for life that apply universally in every industry and sector.

### **Rule 1: Leaders Care About People**

The best leaders always demonstrate how much they care about people, the heart of every profession. Individual imagination, grit, and the indomitable human spirit outweigh even the most advanced technology. If you are a Founder, CEO, President, Managing Partner, Innovator, Disruptor, or aspiring business leader, then you have a bold vision for the future, which you share powerfully with your team.

### **Rule 2: Great Leaders Can't Be Mass Produced Quickly**

Why not? Because you can't wait until after a crisis occurs to find bold, talented, and experienced leaders to solve complex and unprecedented problems. You must anticipate those problems before they occur and, learning to lead well – especially in a crisis – takes time.

### **Rule 3: Great Leaders Are Selfless**

They always place the needs of others before their own needs, in business and in life. Helping your team solve a complex problem. Volunteering in your community. Caring for the sick. Giving your time and talents to help the hungry and the homeless. All are the hallmarks of selfless leadership.

### **Rule 4: Leadership is Not a Position**

Great leaders are not defined by a job, a title, or an office. They are not made by wealth, fame, or popularity. Leadership is a process of learning and relentless curiosity — a continuous journey, an evolution, not a destination. Anyone who commits to this approach can be a leader.

### **Rule 5: Leaders Win**

They choose faith over fear; a boundless faith in their vision, their mission, and those whom they serve. Leaders perpetuate a culture of success across their teams. They don't fear failure; they only fear the failure to try. Great leaders always have high expectations, set seemingly impossible goals, achieve them, and then aim higher. They are relentless in their pursuit of excellence, but they don't seek perfection. In all they do, the best leaders inspire impact.



### **Rule 6: Leaders Thrive on Change**

They inspire a culture of innovation across their teams. They empower all around them to be comfortable in uncomfortable, stressful, or crisis situations. "Keep calm and carry on." When others see uncertainty, problems, or roadblocks to success, leaders see opportunities to excel. They have seemingly infinite energy, enthusiasm, and optimism, but they use good judgment and know when to exercise caution.

### **Rule 7: Great Leaders Inspire Confidence**

"Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage." ~ Dale Carnegie

They are self-assured and self-aware. They understand and admit their own strengths and weaknesses. Great leaders inspire confidence among those whom they serve. They overcome fear with action. They are humble. They are neither doubtful nor arrogant. They lead with heart. They are catalysts who ensure others exceed their own perceived limitations or expectations.

### **Rule 8: Leaders are Quiet Professionals**

They get the job done right, the first time, every time. Then, they set to work on the next objective. They don't seek credit or praise. Rather, they downplay their personal contributions to mission success. Great leaders are satisfied only when the achievements of those whom they serve are recognized.

### **Rule 9: Leaders Ask Insightful Questions**

They are curious. They seek the truth. They ask who, what, why and how? They ask how they can help you, and then they do. They ask the best questions that inspire dialogue and evoke multiple responses.

### **Rule 10: Great Leaders Forgive**

"Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a constant attitude." ~ Martin Luther King Jr.

Wherever there is greatness - great leadership, a great organization or even strong emotion - also the potential for error is great. Leaders forgive others, they forgive themselves, and they learn from their mistakes. Exceptional leaders and those they serve will make well-intentioned errors that have consequences. Our ability to forgive honest mistakes and to be compassionate with those whom we serve must remain true, especially in the toughest situations. The crucible of a crisis magnifies a leader's good and bad qualities, and demands the highest degree of empathy and forgiveness, through which the best leaders emerge.

### **Rule 11: The Best Leaders Always Do the Right Thing**

Leaders do so because they have a deep sense of personal morality. This is not a matter of law or policy. It is a matter of conscience firmly grounded in their code of ethics. The right thing might be the hardest option, but for a leader it is an easy choice.



**Founders, CEOs, Presidents, Partners, Innovators, Disruptors, and Future Leaders:**

What follows are critically important questions that leaders should ask of themselves and those whom they serve on a recurring basis. Derived from the **11 Rules** and practiced successfully in dozens of high-performance organizations, they keep us sharp, focused, and resilient while accelerating our teams' success. I've found the question-and-answer process also inspires leaders to sustain a lifestyle of continuous improvement. And it is equally powerful in educating new leaders, beginning innovative ventures, and accelerating established businesses in any stage of organizational development. Please employ them as you deem appropriate.

What is your plan of action to achieve your shared vision?

How do you inspire your talented people to embrace the vision and participate in the plan with urgency?

How do you empower and inspire the leaders you are developing to exceed your expectations and their own perceived potential, thus preparing them for success in future crises?

How do you demonstrate and inspire selfless leadership across your senior team and your enterprise?

How do you inspire a culture of curiosity across your enterprise and develop leaders on your team who are lifelong learners?

How do you inspire impact and ensure a winning culture across your enterprise?

How do you inspire a culture of change leadership across your organization?

How do you inspire confidence among your team to become better than the best leaders you have known?

How do you lead through action and personal example?

How do you demonstrate and inspire quiet professionalism across your organization?

How do you inspire curiosity across your teams?

How well and how often do you forgive others, and yourself?

What is your ethical code?