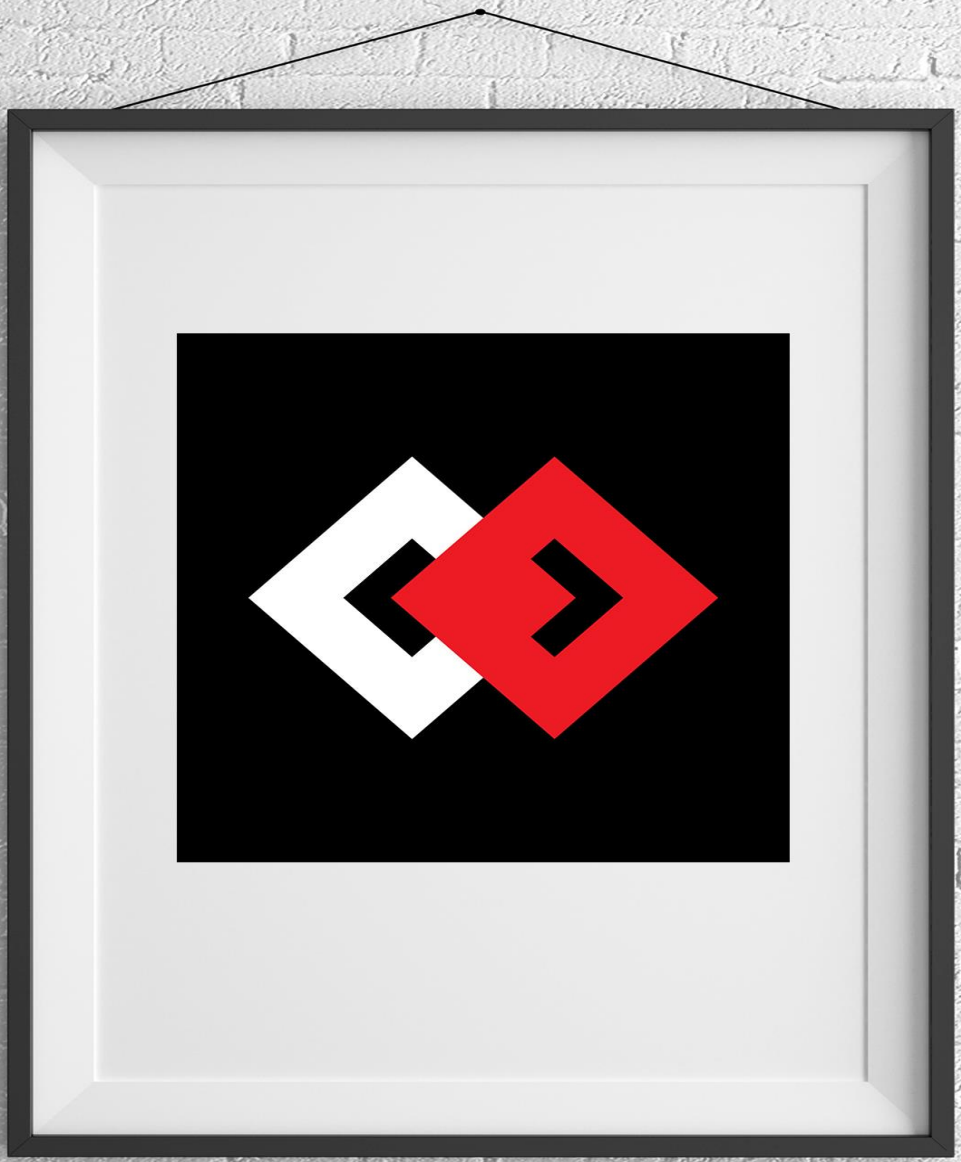
The 9 Foundations of Leadership



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How to Read this Book

There is no real right or wrong way to read a book per se. I am willing to bet that you will likely read this eBook from start to finish in order. I just want to mention that these foundations do not necessarily build on each other; however, they are the start of your leadership building blocks to come.

These foundations are the start point and not the finish line. They will give you the solid base to begin in leading people and looking out for their best interests and consequently your organization's as well. From this book, what you can expect is to begin to build on it with practical examples.

Finally, note that how the Foundations are explained may or may replicate exactly how your organization operates. This does not discredit the Foundation; however, you need to understand the Foundation and then apply it to your organization.

Foundation 1: Be the Expert

Many leaders show up to a job ignorant, ignorant of what it is that they are actually there to achieve. It is quite the paradox if you think about it. After all, leaders are supposed to be the ones providing guidance, direction, and ultimate leadership to their organization in order to achieve success. But how does one go from being ignorant to the expert? They throw away all of the preconceived ideas that they have of being a "boss" and become a "leader."

I remember showing up to my first unit - 1 Service Battalion, CFB Edmonton - to have my Company Sergeant Major tell me "you don't know squat, sir!" It was an eye-opener. Here I thought I knew it all but quickly that idea came crashing down but a new one quickly replaced it. If I didn't know squat, then I was going to learn and learn quickly. Ladies and gentlemen this was the creation of Foundation 1: Be the Expert.

No doubt, you have training, education, and experience in whatever field that you are in. However, in order to achieve the goal of the first foundation you need to let it all go. You need to understand that you don't know squat, but instead of sulking in the corner, you need to go out and seek the answers to questions you do not even know exist yet. Being the expert is all about learning your job, through and through, inside and out, and whatever other metaphor you want to use. However, it does not just stop there.

Being an expert goes beyond just your job. Have subordinates? Great! Now go and learn their jobs! In order to lead them, you need to understand where they are coming from in their points of view when dealing with issues. You need to feel what it is and understand when they tell you something's not right and how to fix it so that you can look at it not just from a business dollars and cents point of view but an organizational effectiveness and efficiency point of view.

So you're flying at your job, can fill in for any subordinate at any time so that means you can sit back and relax now right? Nope, try again. You have peers, and those peers lead organizations as well. Time to understand those as well! Yes, you need to know how they fit in the bigger picture. How they support the larger institution and how they achieve organizational success. As well, should one of them fall ill, retire or get fired then you

immediately become a candidate to replace them or fill the hole temporarily until a suitable replacement is found. In the end, it is about supporting the organization for which you are giving your time and effort for. Ensuring that it succeeds the best that it can.

Finally, no you are not done yet, you need to learn your boss's job. Yes, your boss. I could quickly sum this up and say: you want to be the boss one day, don't you? Then you need to learn their job to show everyone that you can do it. However, there's more to it than just that. Learning your boss's job allows you to see the organization through their eyes, which means you can better support them in their endeavors to achieve success. Learning your boss's job allows you better prepare for meetings, reports, and conferences, etc. It gives you knowledge of what they need to know and how they need it prepared so that you do not waste either of your time. Time is the rarest commodity so take it and run!

So, that is how you become an expert - simply learn everyone's job, and you will be good to go. However, you need to think past the pain and effort that will have endured during the period of becoming an expert and see what it will bring for you. When you become the expert, not only are you the person which everyone can depend on, and yes that is a good thing, but you become more credible. Credibility allows you to influence the organization which allows you help guide it in the right direction. Credibility is the key ingredient in being a successful leader.

Foundation 2: Be a Constant Change for Improvement

Being a leader is a tough job. Everyone expects you to know everything and lead them in the right direction. However, to complicate the issue, we are in an era of constant change especially with the constant changes due to technology and its ever-evolving impact upon society today. In order to combat these possible negative trends, you need to understand your own strengths, limitations and be constantly trying to self-improve yourself.

Many people have no issues with knowing their strengths. I know that I am a good communicator, I have a serious knack for public speaking as well, and I am highly analytical and think critically. Knowing these allows me to know what I bring to the table and team. I constantly place myself in situations where I can maximize on these strengths for the betterment of the organization and of course the team. Just recently, I was able to dissect organizational issues within my unit (analytical skills), determine the solutions to those problems (critical thinking skills), figure out how to depict the issues and solutions in a way everyone could understand (communication skills), and finally I briefed my entire unit on all of the above (public speaking). The point is not that I am trying to gloat, but I knew my strengths and pushed my organization to improve itself through the use of those strengths.

Limitations, on the other hand, can be more difficult to figure out for some people. Writing skills I know are one of my many limitations. However, I never shy away from a chance to write, heck I'm writing this eBook am I not? That in itself is how I am striving for improvement within myself. As a leader, you need to understand your limitations so that you can surround yourself with people whose strengths ARE your limitations. That way you can continually improve yourself, your people and the organization in which you serve.

Finally, if you haven't caught on yet but self-improvement is absolutely necessary as a leader. Like in business, "if you're not flying you're dying" in leadership the moment you stop learning is the moment you stop being useful for your organization. As I have already stated, the world is ever-evolving, and you as a leader need to evolve with it. Your people will evolve as well, and therefore you will need to discover new communication strategies, management principles and work dynamics.

Therefore, with the ever-changing world, you need to push yourself, your people, and your organization to “keep with the times, ” and this solidifies this foundation. Keep seeking improvement in everything in your life and your people will follow you, your organization will flourish, and you will continue to grow in ways you could never imagine possible.

Foundation 3: Be the Example for All

You see it in leadership books and articles everywhere "lead by example." The concept is perfectly correct and absolutely critical as a leader. However, there is more to the foundation than leading by example.

Be the example for all, if you are unfamiliar with it, it is a concept by which you show your people how they should act, operate, behave and conduct themselves. If your people follow your example, then you would be a happy person.

The people you lead, in some regards, are like children. They watch everything which you do. From how you conduct yourself, how you dress to how to talk to people at meetings, socially, etc. You are always under a microscope when you are in the eyes of your people. Therefore, you have to set the example for them. If you are constantly coming in late, leaving early, dressed like a sloth and conducting yourself in an unacceptable manner then your people will do so as well. Simply stating that you do the things you do because you are the boss does not work in this day and age. You need to understand that you are no better than your people and therefore you need to hold yourself to a higher standard than what you expect from them.

Does this mean that you have no "boss perks?" Absolutely not, there are times when you will enjoy the benefits of being "the boss" such as showing up late one day or leaving early. However, my advice to you is to "use but don't abuse." I have personally seen too many leaders abusing their liberties to the point where it began to erodes morale and the good order of the organization. At that point, it is already too late.

However, what do I mean by "be an example for all?" Leading your people by example, like I stated, is necessary but you can do so much more. I look at this foundation more holistically in that you can easily be an example for your peers and superiors as well. Show your peers how great of a leader you are by being an example for them as well. Make your superiors' life easier, volunteer for those extra assignments, be early for all of your meetings and appointments are just a few ways you can be the example for your peers.

For your superiors, in order to be the example, you need to be the subordinate which they always wanted. Never waste their time by showing up prepared for everything, show them the progress which you are making within your section and finally show them how you are developing your people. Good superiors will immediately acknowledge what you have done and what you are doing. Great superiors will recognize what they are not doing which you are and begin to do that to you and your peers. This is how you be an example for them.

As you can see, “being an example for all” is much more complex than simply “leading by example.” As a true leader, you must understand this and employ this mentality so that you can reach your true potential but most importantly lead your people and your organization to their true potential.

Foundation 4: Be One to Communicate the Goal and Move Towards It

I've seen it in so many organizations a lack of communication which leads to the internal implosion of said organization. The one thing which we humans do the most is often the thing which we are the worst at - communication. However, what you are trying to communicate is just as important as to the act itself.

As a leader, you need to develop what your intent is the way forward within your organization. Whether that be to increase your recurring customers, increase online presence or move to international markets your people need to know what your intent is so that they can go out and achieve it on your behalf.

Intent is a powerful word which often does not get utilized to its full potential. Too often leaders do not even express their intent by using the word. Instead, they simply state that "this is the direction in which we are moving" or "I am going to achieve this" or anything of the like. The difference, though, is that when you use intent, it enables your people to use their initiative to achieve it. For example, if you said "I intend to expand our social media presence in order to drive further growth," then that would enable your marketing department to use their initiative to develop a marketing campaign around it. Your staff may begin to follow your already established social media accounts in preparation for the new way forward and will be ready to share the updates to their followers. As you can see, a lot of action and initiative can be taken from simply stating your intent.

However, there's more to it than just intent. Your people need to know exactly what you mean by your intent. It's great that people listen to your intent and run with it, but if they do not understand the meaning behind it, then this could have disastrous results. For example, if somehow your people mistook your social media intent for the concept that you were going to outsource it then this would negatively impact those working in your social media marketing department, as they would be thinking that they are going to lose their jobs! However, no doubt that this was not what you meant. So a clear understanding of your meaning is needed to ensure that these events do not occur.

Finally, you actually need to lead your people in the direction which you gave your intent for and ensure that they understood. Leadership, as you will read in Foundation 7, is about making decisions and providing direction. In order to do so, you need to actually lead what you have been communicating. Be updated on the organization's progress, and provide guidance as required.

Foundation 5: Be Respectful to Your People and Support Them.

Your people are the cornerstone of your organization and any organization truly. So, it is in your best interest to treat them with respect and support them in their endeavors. Failure to do so will just alienate you and them leading to a lack of trust, confidence, and dedication.

I have always said that respect is earned and not taken. I've come across many leaders in the past who are firmly in the opposite, "I take my respect out of my people." Well, ladies and gentlemen, I am telling you today that that mentality is absolute garbage and not how you should operate. Treating your people with respect will quickly enable them to respect you. Being respectful to people is pretty easy in all reality, treat them how you want to be treated, and the respectful environment will be built. I will refer to people as "sir or ma'am," despite the fact they have to refer to me as "sir," and there is no requirement for me to do the same. However, I do it as a manner of respect for them. Additionally, there is nothing which annoys me more than someone cutting me off when I am speaking. It almost literally makes my blood boil. Therefore, whenever someone talks to me, I make sure that I do no cut them off regardless of my point of view on the topic being discussed. As well, I make sure no one else cuts them off, the member deserves a chance to speak their complete thought without interruption.

Supporting your people shows your people that you actually care about their welfare. When you show your people that you care about their welfare, then they will begin to care about your welfare. When people care about your welfare, then they will be willing to go that extra mile when you need them to without fighting or hassle. They will do so because they want to help you. So, what are some easy ways to take care of someone's welfare? Simply caring about what is important to your people. Obviously, their family is the most important thing to them. Thus, by knowing your people's spouses, children, parents, etc. shows that you are about the most important thing to them.

Another way to show your personnel that you care about their welfare is by developing them. Also, discussed in Foundation 6: Be a Mentor, developing your people shows that you want to see them succeed in their career as well. Additionally, it shows that you care about your people's future and not just there to suck the life out of them during the work day. It

may sound a little simple, but I can't tell you enough how many managers out there that simply do not understand this ideology. Investing in your people through their development is a better investment than stock, you, unfortunately, cannot put an ROI number on it. Instead, though, you can reap the rewards of the ROI which they will bring when they implement new ideas, strategies, and investments upon their return with the new knowledge.

With ensuring that you are respectful to your people and you should – through actions – that you care for their welfare you will develop a relationship with them which other organizations could only wish for. The trust, confidence, and dedication which will be developed will allow you to have the credibility to ask your people to go the extra mile when it is time to do so.

Foundation 6: Be a Mentor

As I have stated earlier, you are held to a higher standard because you are the leader of your organization. So why not raise everyone to that standard? It is an easy concept to understand yet, so few people truly employ it. After all, the success and failure of your organization rest on your shoulders so you should do everything you can to ensure success.

Mentorship requires time and a lot of it. Therefore, in order to be an effective mentor, you need to know when is the best to do it. Which is basically all the time. However, that doesn't really help you either, does it! What I recommend is to carve out time in your schedule now with your people who you plan on mentoring. This is a more formal type of mentoring because you are setting a time and likely an agenda to the period as well.

However, that is just one way to mentor, but there are more. For example, you can be a mentor through tasks. Assign a task to a subordinate who does not necessarily have the experience to complete it but leave yourself open for questions, advice, and guidance. This will allow your member to test their limits of their experience, think above of their current position and allow them to seek advice at your level. All great wins for both of you.

Another form of mentorship which I use often is the use of questions. When I receive an answer on a topic which I feel was inadequate I reply to them with very short, non-descriptive answers. For example, I reply with simply "No, try again." My goal here is to allow them to try to figure out for themselves to where they went wrong and what the true answer is. Research has shown that if someone figures out an answer on their own vice simply being told it, then they are more likely to retain that information.

I think that some leaders get scared of mentorship because they fear of the "young generation" up and coming. People get very protective of their job because they fear that the new generation is out there to take them out of their jobs. To say that this is short-sighted is an understatement if there ever was one. Think about how hard you have worked for your organization. How hard you have worked to build it up, make it better, hit targets, etc., etc., etc. Next, come to the realization that one day you will no longer be at that organization. Regardless of the mechanism of you leaving,

one day you will leave your organization so why would you want to ensure its failure because you did not set someone else up for success post you? Ensure your legacy by ensuring someone is ready to take over from you by mentoring them to do so. And you will not let your hard work go to waste.

Foundation 7: Be Decisive

As a leader, you have many primary responsibilities but none more than making decisions. DECISIONS?! NO! Yes decisions, you will and have to make decisions. I'm not sure why people get so scared of making decisions since as soon as you wake you immediately begin to make decisions! Get up or not to get up is a decision, take a shower or go to the gym, is a decision, what to wear is a decision. You make thousands of decisions a day.

Now granted leadership decisions are much more complex than personal decisions – most of the time. However, you need to learn how to cut away what I refer to as the nausea of the situation and look at the core issue, evaluate the options available and then decide.

So, what is the nausea of the situation? It is everything which attempts to cloud the core issues but in reality, have no impact on the actual situation. People's personal feelings, options, and other interests will attempt to skew the true issue at heart. You need to sit back and cut through these issues and keep disconnected from those issues and not get your feelings involved. You need to look at the issue and immediately identify these nausea-forming aspects and cut them away.

Next, look at all the available options. Need clarification on something, then ask the question. Don't like a particular option for a particular reason then send the team back to the drawing board. However, at one point prior to making your decision you need to look at all of the viable solutions face-à-face and determine which one is the best for your organization and this particular situation. Do not forget to get input from your team members and the subject matter experts within your organization. You cannot be expected to know everything, but you need to know who and where to tap into to get the information you require.

Finally, a decision too late is useless. As I say, the 80% solution on time is better than the 100% too late. No plan survives execution. Things go wrong, situations change, and unknown issues will arise then your 100% solution is worthless. Going ahead with 80% solution on time will allow your people to develop the ability to be flexible and learn how to react to changing situations. With that, you will lead your team to success through effective decision making.

Foundation 8: Be Constantly Building the Team

It is scientifically proven that groups of people achieve more than individuals do. Therefore, it is in your best interest to turn your organization into a cohesive team, one that constantly and consistently works together to achieve your organization's goals. But those teams need to be brought together and built to work together.

Team building is on every leadership consultant's must do lift. That's because it works! Teams achieve incredible feats. People look out for each other, they help each other, and they work extra for each other. The organization strives all because it worked together for that common goal. So how do you bring a group of people together to form a team?

Perhaps the first thing for you to understand is that every time there is a new person who joins the team, and/or whenever someone leaves the team, the process starts over. The simple reason for that is because the team has changed and the team dynamics have changed. Therefore, you need to build the new team.

As well, if you as the leader are the new person to the team then there's a key thing to remember, you are the new person! Too many leaders immediately show up and expect the team to conform to them vice the leader learning how the team operates and most importantly why the team operates that way. So, remember if you are the new guy then you are the new guy, and you need to act accordingly.

In order to build the team, you will need to get everyone on the same page as to the vision of your organization. Much like I explained in Foundation 4. As well, there are a number of ways to develop a tight-knit team. Many leadership consultants will talk about various "team building exercises and workshops." These methods work fine but can be costly in time and money. However, there are simpler ways to develop a team.

One simple way to develop a team is to get out of the office once a while for meals. Lunches are very easy to do assuming that your team has the same lunch schedule. In this case, you could even look at extending the lunch period for a small amount of time, such as 30 minutes and give one ground rule: "no shop talk." The elimination of talk about work will force people to talk about things which matter to them. In conjunction, others will build a

bond on these discussions of interests outside of work. And as Simon Sinek alludes to, this is how relationships are made. Relationships are the cornerstone of good teams. Good teams lead to great organizations; however, the teams just need to be formed.

Other ways to form teams is through various fun activities just as going to a golf driving range, laser tag or any form of good fun. Of course, paying for it all on the company dime will definitely help the employee turnout! Organization BBQs in the summertime or ice skating in the winter are other great examples. Regardless of the activity, keep the "shop talk" to a nonexistent minimum and watch the relationships form.

Foundation 9: Be Present

One of the biggest complaints I hear from followers of an organization is that they never see their leaders nor do they have any concept of the direction in which the organization is moving. This is a common issue whether you are involved with a small business, large corporation or not-for-profit organization; leaders must be present to their people.

It may seem simple but presence is key so that your people know you are in it with them. It shows that you have just as much at stake as they do within your organization and in reality, you have more! So how can you be present? It's pretty simple really, just get away from your desk! Every day when I arrive at my office, I pour myself a cup of coffee and spend 30 minutes of my morning walking around and talking to people. Generally, I try to stay away from the shop talk because I am trying to get to know my people more but if someone comes up I definitely address it.

Another way that I am present is by walking around through my various sections. Now I will fully admit that my organization may be a bit more complex than yours at this time. I currently have 200 personnel spend across nine different locations under my command. But the principle remains the same, I schedule an hour or so a week to get out and walk around. I see as many people as I can during that time. I talk sports, interests, the weather whatever comes up and of course, the occasional work issue.

During these walkaround sessions though I have the following goals in the back of my mind. I keep my people informed of what our mission is. Keeping them informed of our mission keeps everyone on the same track as to the direction in which we are moving in. The next goal I have is to keep them informed of the changing situation if there is one. For example, if there is a major shift in priorities then these are a great time to ensure people understand that this is happening and most importantly why it is happening. Finally, the last goal I have is ensuring that my people know where our organization fits in the larger overall picture. This allows them to understand my mindset and thought process. Therefore, they are able to start thinking in my place and in turn, this shortens the whole decision-making process as described in Foundation 7: Be Decisive.

Want More?



The 9 Foundations of Leadership is just the start. Be sure to keep checking out www.movingforwardleadership.com for more! There you can keep up to speed with all my podcast episodes as well as links to all my social media accounts.

As well, let's talk! Seriously, swing by the Moving Forward Leadership Facebook Group and start talking leadership with me. The goal of this group is to develop a leadership community where people can freely come and ask questions, provide advice and generally discuss the topic at heart.

The 9 Foundations of Leadership from time-to-time may get updated so be sure to keep an eye out for an updated version. Either way, I hope you enjoyed this book, and feel free to reach out to me for questions, clarifications or feedback, I truly love hearing from you all!

Remember:

Keep Trying...
Keep Achieving...
Keep Moving Forward!