

FREE CHAPTER PREVIEW

Lead Forward

The Modern Leadership Workbook for Team Builders, Remote Managers, and Professionals
Without a Playbook

Kai Rylan

Get the full book at ebookdev.com/lead-forward

What Leadership Actually Is in 2026

****INTRODUCTION**** As a leadership coach, I've worked with over 500 leaders, and one thing is clear: the traditional notion of leadership is no longer effective. The concept of positional authority, where leaders wield power solely based on their title, is dwindling. In its place, influence-based leadership has emerged, where leaders earn their authority through their actions, behaviors, and relationships. This shift requires a new understanding of what leadership actually is. In this chapter, we'll explore the differences between authority-based and influence-based leadership, and introduce the Lead Forward Model, a framework for modern leadership.

****LEADERSHIP EVOLUTION**** The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, a seminal book by Stephen Covey, is often mistaken for a leadership book. However, it's primarily an individual effectiveness book, focusing on personal development and habits. While these habits are essential for leaders, they don't provide a comprehensive framework for leading others. In contrast, influence-based leadership relies on the Social Exchange Theory, which states that leaders build relationships and earn influence by providing value, support, and resources to their team members. This approach is rooted in the principle of reciprocity, where leaders foster a sense of mutual obligation and cooperation.

To illustrate this concept, consider the case of Rachel, a remote manager at a tech startup. She was struggling to motivate her team, and her traditional authority-based approach wasn't working. By shifting her focus to building relationships and providing value to her team members, Rachel was able to increase engagement and productivity. She achieved this by using the technique of "virtual coffee breaks," where she would schedule regular one-on-one meetings with team members to discuss their goals, challenges, and interests. This approach allowed Rachel to build trust and establish a sense of connection with her team, even in a remote work environment.

****SELF-AWARENESS**** Self-awareness is a critical component of influence-based leadership. The Johari Window, a psychological model, highlights the importance of understanding our own strengths, weaknesses, values, and biases. By recognizing our own limitations and areas for growth, we can develop a more authentic and effective leadership style. The principle of self-awareness is rooted in the concept of emotional intelligence, which enables leaders to recognize and regulate their own emotions, as well as empathize with others.

To develop self-awareness, try using the following worksheet:

****Leadership Self-Awareness Worksheet****

1. What are my core values, and how do they align with my leadership style?

----- 2.

What are my strengths and weaknesses as a leader, and how do they impact my team?

----- 3.

What are my emotional triggers, and how do I manage them in high-pressure situations?

----- 4.

What are my biases and assumptions, and how do they influence my decision-making?

By completing this worksheet, you'll gain a deeper understanding of your own strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth, allowing you to develop a more authentic and effective leadership style.

****TEAM DYNAMICS**** Effective leadership is not just about individual effectiveness; it's also about building and leading high-performing teams. The Tuckman Model of Team Development highlights the five stages of team formation: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. By understanding these stages, leaders can facilitate team growth and development, fostering a culture of collaboration and trust. The principle of team dynamics is rooted in the concept of social identity theory, which states

that individuals derive a sense of belonging and identity from their group membership.

To illustrate this concept, consider the case of David, a team lead at a marketing agency. He was struggling to build a cohesive team, and his traditional approach was leading to conflicts and misunderstandings. By using the technique of "team chartering," where team members collaboratively define their goals, values, and norms, David was able to establish a shared sense of purpose and identity. This approach allowed the team to move beyond the storming stage and into the norming and performing stages, where they could focus on delivering high-quality results.

****LEAD FORWARD MODEL**** The Lead Forward Model is a comprehensive framework for modern leadership, consisting of five interconnected domains: Self, Team, Communication, Performance, and Culture. By understanding and developing these domains, leaders can build their influence and effectiveness, driving results and growth in their organizations. The principle of the Lead Forward Model is rooted in the concept of systems thinking, which recognizes that leadership is a complex, dynamic, and interconnected process.

To assess your leadership abilities, try using the following framework:

****Leadership Domain Assessment****

1. Self: What is my level of self-awareness, and how does it impact my leadership style? (Score: 1-5) 2. Team: How effective am I at building and leading high-performing teams? (Score: 1-5) 3. Communication: How clear and effective is my communication style, and how does it impact my team? (Score: 1-5) 4. Performance: How well do I drive results and growth in my organization, and what metrics do I use to measure success? (Score: 1-5) 5. Culture: How do I foster a positive and inclusive culture, and what values do I promote? (Score: 1-5)

By completing this assessment, you'll gain a baseline score and identify areas for growth and development, allowing you to focus on building your leadership capabilities and driving results in your organization.

****APPLICATION**** To apply the concepts and principles outlined in this chapter, try using the following template:

****Leadership Action Plan****

1. What is my goal for developing my influence-based leadership style?
----- 2.
- What specific actions will I take to build relationships and earn influence with
my _____ team _____ members?
----- 3.
- What metrics will I use to measure my progress and success?
----- 4.
- What support systems will I put in place to ensure my continued growth and
development _____ as _____ a _____ leader?

By using this template, you'll be able to create a concrete plan for developing your leadership style and driving results in your organization.

In conclusion, leadership in 2026 requires a new understanding of what leadership actually is. By recognizing the shift from authority-based to influence-based leadership, and by developing our self-awareness, team dynamics, and leadership capabilities, we can build our influence and effectiveness as leaders. The Lead Forward Model provides a comprehensive framework for modern leadership, and by using the tools and techniques outlined in this chapter, you'll be able to develop your leadership style and drive results in your organization.

****WORKED SCENARIO: RESOLVING CONFLICT THROUGH INFLUENCE-BASED LEADERSHIP****

Consider the case of Alex Chen, a marketing manager at a large corporation. Alex was tasked with leading a cross-functional team to launch a new product,

but the team was struggling to meet the deadline due to conflicting priorities and lack of communication. The team consisted of representatives from sales, product development, and creative departments, each with their own agendas and interests.

Alex recognized that a traditional authority-based approach, where she would dictate tasks and timelines, would not be effective in this situation. Instead, she decided to use an influence-based leadership approach to build relationships and earn the trust of her team members.

Step 1: Alex started by scheduling one-on-one meetings with each team member to understand their priorities, concerns, and goals. She used active listening skills to empathize with their perspectives and ask open-ended questions to clarify their needs.

Step 2: Alex identified the common goals and interests among team members and used this information to create a shared vision for the project. She communicated this vision to the team and encouraged them to provide input and feedback.

Step 3: Alex established a collaborative workflow, where team members could share their progress, ask for help, and provide feedback to each other. She also set up regular team meetings to ensure everyone was aligned and working towards the same objectives.

Step 4: As the project progressed, Alex recognized that some team members were struggling with their tasks. She provided coaching and support to help them overcome their challenges, and also empowered them to take ownership of their work.

Through this approach, Alex was able to build trust and credibility with her team members, and the project was successfully launched on time. The team members appreciated Alex's collaborative and supportive leadership style, and they were more motivated to work together to achieve their goals.

****RESEARCH PRINCIPLES AND LEADERSHIP APPLICATIONS****

1. ****Social Identity Theory****: This principle states that individuals derive a sense of identity and belonging from the groups they belong to. In a leadership context, this means that leaders can foster a sense of community and shared identity among team members by promoting a shared vision, values, and goals. For example, a leader can create a team charter that outlines the team's purpose, values, and expectations, and encourages team members to contribute to its development.

Mechanism: Leaders can use social identity theory to create a sense of belonging among team members by:

* Encouraging team members to share their ideas and perspectives * Recognizing and rewarding team members' contributions * Creating opportunities for team members to interact and build relationships with each other

Leadership Application: Leaders can apply social identity theory by creating a shared vision and goals for the team, and encouraging team members to work together to achieve them.

2. ****Self-Determination Theory****: This principle states that individuals have an innate tendency to pursue autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In a leadership context, this means that leaders can promote motivation and engagement among team members by providing autonomy, feedback, and opportunities for growth and development.

Mechanism: Leaders can use self-determination theory to promote motivation and engagement among team members by:

* Providing autonomy and flexibility in work arrangements * Offering feedback and coaching to help team members develop their skills and abilities * Recognizing and rewarding team members' achievements and progress

Leadership Application: Leaders can apply self-determination theory by providing team members with the autonomy to make decisions and take ownership of their work, and by offering feedback and coaching to help them develop their skills and abilities.

****EXTENDED WORKSHEET/FRAMEWORK****

****Influence-Based Leadership Self-Assessment Framework****

****Section 1: Self-Awareness****

1. What are my core values, and how do they align with my leadership style?

----- 2.

What are my strengths and weaknesses as a leader, and how do they impact my _____ team?

----- 3.

What are my emotional triggers, and how do I manage them in high-pressure situations?

****Section 2: Relationship-Building****

1. What are the names and roles of my team members, and what are their strengths _____ and _____ weaknesses?

----- 2.

What are the goals and priorities of my team members, and how do they align _____ with _____ the _____ team's _____ objectives?

----- 3.

What are the communication styles and preferences of my team members, and how can I adapt my approach to meet their needs?

****Section 3: Influence and Impact****

1. What are the key performance indicators (KPIs) for my team, and how can I use data and feedback to inform my decision-making?

----- 2.

What are the potential obstacles and challenges that my team may face, and how can I use my influence to overcome them?

----- 3.

What are the opportunities for growth and development for my team members, and how can I use my influence to support their development?

****Section 4: Action Plan****

1. What are the specific actions I will take to build relationships and earn the trust of my team members?

----- 2.

What are the specific actions I will take to promote motivation and engagement among my team members?

----- 3.

What are the specific actions I will take to use my influence to drive results and achieve the team's objectives?

****COMMON LEADERSHIP MISTAKE: MICROMANAGING****

One common leadership mistake is micromanaging, where leaders try to control every aspect of their team members' work. This approach can be damaging to team members' motivation and engagement, as it undermines their autonomy and sense of ownership.

Corrected Approach: Instead of micromanaging, leaders should focus on providing guidance and support, while giving team members the autonomy to make decisions and take ownership of their work. This approach promotes motivation and engagement, as team members feel more empowered and responsible for their work.

****BRIDGE TO NEXT CHAPTER****

In the next chapter, we will explore the concept of adaptive leadership, and how leaders can develop the skills and competencies needed to navigate

complex and changing environments. We will discuss the importance of agility, resilience, and continuous learning, and provide practical strategies for leaders to develop these skills. By the end of the chapter, readers will have a deeper understanding of the adaptive leadership mindset and the tools and techniques needed to lead effectively in today's fast-paced and uncertain world.

Get the complete Lead Forward workbook

12 chapters • 7 frameworks • 90-day development plan • PDF + ePub

ebookdev.com/lead-forward — \$14.99