

We all want to become better leaders, because leadership is about making a real difference in the world. We don't want to just manage people.

If a management course or a coach isn't in the budget and your company hasn't done 360-degree reviews in years, you still can improve.

AZ magazine worked with leadership strategist, facilitator and coach Dean Newlund to create a special month-long program for our readers. You can start becoming a better leader in 30 days – weekends off, of course.

Newlund, the president of Mission Facilitators International, works with CEOs and executives from companies such as TGen and Honeywell. But the principles of extraordinary leadership can be helpful whether you're a senior executive or a mid-level manager.

The backbone of great leadership is to create a vision and a process to get there, he says. "We've got to move beyond survival even in these times," Newlund says.

So, if becoming a leader sounds overwhelming, Newlund has broken it down into four topics, one for each week this month: leading yourself, leading another, leading a team and leading change.

You might start from the beginning and follow through this four-week plan. You might pick one section to work on each month. You might grab days 3, 14 and 19. Or you might skip ahead to leading change if that's what you're going through right now.

"Or you might find that the reason you're having trouble leading a team is because you're not leading yourself," Newlund says, so start at the beginning.

Some ideas will take an hour and you can do on your own, others will take longer and will involve other people. But just dedicating yourself to becoming a good leader is a start. Here are things to do each weekday this month.

## **Week One: Leading yourself**

Before you can lead others, you must lead yourself. Master these skills this week and you will be ready to move on to leading someone else.

Day 1:

**Assess Yourself:** Ask five of your most trusted friends, colleagues or family members these simple questions: "What are my greatest strengths, where can I improve, and what should I do differently?"

Take two of your strengths and find ways to make them great. Then take two areas that you're not as good at, and develop action items to improve them.

Day 2:

**Manage Your Priorities:** Before you start each week, schedule your *work*, not just your *meetings*. Also, make a list of daily rituals designed to keep your energy level high. (For example, eating right, exercise, sleep, time with a good book, etc). Place a check mark at the end of each day next to those completed activities. Add work rituals (For example, compliment someone on good work, read industry news or make sure to walk the floor).

Too often, Newlund says, our calendars get full of commitments that others ask us to do. Those, he says, get done first. "And the most important things, the things that are more strategic and help us plan for the future, our work life balance, get done second, or not at all." he says.

Day 3:

**Build Accountability:** Develop a list called "What am I avoiding, what I am not being responsible for, what am I afraid to say and to whom?" Avoidance zaps us of our ability to take on new commitments. Start by tackling the easiest items first. "I've noticed that once I've completed a task I've been avoiding, I am more confident, more energized and more willing to do more," Newlund says.

Day 4:

**Improve Your Emotional IQ:** The next time you assess what caused a painful discussion, break it down into three areas "What do I own about this situation? What should they own? And, what perception do they have of me that I still need to manage? Sometimes we place undue blame on ourselves or the other person. "We need to be better at becoming our own PR agency," Newlund says. "We need to get the right information out there. Sometimes we think our work will speak for itself, but sometimes the work doesn't speak loud enough."

Day 5:

**Build Confidence:** The next time someone praises you for the work you've done, fully accept it and say thank you. Does this sound like advice from Oprah? "We often don't accept praise because we don't feel like we deserve it," Newlund says. "Confident leaders breed confidence in others. "

## **Week Two: Leading another**

Once you can lead yourself, you're ready to move to leading another person. To start, it's important to trust that others will do the work as well as you. This is easier said than done, especially for new managers. They may struggle with balancing getting work done correctly with developing others. The key to accomplish both is mentoring others to do what you do.

Day 6:

**Listen For Truth:** Consciously choose to be in the moment when you listen to another person. Start with people you find easy to listen to then graduate to those you shut out. How? "Turnoff your inner monologue, " Newlund says. "Focus on what is the true meaning behind their words, what are they not saying, what do they value most? We can disagree and understand someone: Those two concepts aren't mutually exclusive. When a leader truly listens and understands another, he or she creates an environment for trust and new ideas."

Day 7

**Get Heard:** Adjust your communication style to match the style of another so the content of your message isn't rejected by how it is presented.

We all have different ways to communicate to others, and ways we want others to communicate to us. Newlund says: "In sales, studies have found that if a sale doesn't go through, it's often not because the product or the service is wrong, but because the style of the salesperson rubbed the customer the wrong way. Flexing our communication style applies to all of us because we're all selling ideas"

Newlund says that might mean slowing down your speaking, talking about vision versus tactics or maybe adding historic data to a PowerPoint presentation. "This doesn't mean being a chameleon, or doing something that just isn't you. Look for clues and adjust your communication style to match the other person. And if you're totally lost, simply ask them "what should I NOT do when communicating with you?" (To discover your communication style go to [www.missionfacilitators.com/styles](http://www.missionfacilitators.com/styles)).

Day 8

**Delegate:** Delegate a project to a person who is willing and able to do the task. Help them learn and problem-solve by asking them open-ended questions, and avoid giving them the answers. Set clear, measureable expectations.

Sometimes there are gopher-type projects to delegate, i.e. do these tasks exactly as I describe. At times this is appropriate. Other times we need to delegate a project by clarifying the outcomes and allow the employee to figure out the rest. This is a big step toward maturing as a leader, Newlund says. "It's hard to trust especially if I'm delegating a task or a project that I've done for years. It's easy to think: What if they don't do it as well as me? What if they fail? If they fail, I fail, so maybe I should just do it myself. However, with clear expectations and the right amount of support, leaders and their employees can be successful in their expanding roles.

Day 9

**Recognize Another:** Publicly recognize one person's success. Clearly state what she did, how she did it, and the impact she had on others.

Day 10

**Develop a Career Plan:** Ask someone what their career goals are, and then develop a game plan to help her reach those goals. Don't wait for the annual review, Newlund says. Too much happens between them. Career development meetings needs to be dynamic. Find out what truly motivates your employee. What are their personal and professional dreams? Together asses the competencies and experiences she needs to get there. Then, identify projects that will require her to learn and develop those competencies.

### **Week Three: Leading a team**

Once you can lead one person, you're ready to take on a team. Build on the skills you've learned and take them to a larger group.

Day 11

**Assess Your Team:** Ask your team members what they think are the team's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. From that, identify common themes that will help you establish goals and strategies.

Day 12

**Define What Business You Are In:** Ask your team what they think the team's mission is. Facilitate the discussion by asking everyone to answer these questions: who are we, what do we do, for whom do we do it, how do we do it, and why do we do it? Then combine the answers to create a compelling mission statement. You and your team may already know the company mission statement. But there are missions unique to each team. This is helpful, too, if you are creating a new team.

Day 13

**Conduct a Daily Huddle:** Hold a 10-minute morning huddle to solicit everyone's priorities for the day or week. Then make sure they align with the goals, mission and your company's values. You may need to help them re-prioritize.

Day 14

**Lead a Dynamic Meeting:** For your next meeting, send out an agenda that states the reasons for the meeting, why people are asked to participate in the meeting, how decisions will be made and any materials that should be read prior to the meeting.

"There's so much time wasted in meetings, and in many ways they have become corporate Sominex" Newlund says. "Many meetings are simply ways to communicate information to others. They could be a lot more productive."

"Meetings should be about making decisions. Clarify the agenda, and answer the questions asked by participants 'Why should I go to this meeting? Am I coming here to listen, to make a decision, to provide brainstorming?' Most times people don't know why they are attending."

Day 15:

**Share the Success:** Bring in donuts and coffee and assemble the group together to share positive stories about the company or team. Great ideas often get generated by these discussions. This is a time to provide positive feedback to the team or key individuals. Most of the time, we share feedback only when things have gone wrong. "Feedback becomes feared", Newlund says. "We think if the boss wants to talk to us something must wrong." Sharing success will help reinforce what is right.

## **Week Four: Leading change**

If you are successfully leading a team, you still may struggle with leading change. Almost every company is going through major change and learning to lead through it is the final stage in leadership development.

Day 16

**Engage Others:** Involve a group of front-line managers or team members in a discussion about their impressions on what needs to change.

Often when a large change happens, the top leader will announce it. "This sends a message that the person who communicates the change owns the change. Those that implement the change should announce it," Newlund says.

Day 17

**Assess the Willingness for Change:** Ask yourself what types of attitudes, conflicting priorities or resources might be a barrier to implementing a change initiative?

You can do this by yourself or pull others in. Will they want to change? If not, why? What will prevent us from changes: resources, priorities, and attitude? This should become part of the planning process. Acknowledge the difficulties.

Day 18

**Define the Benefits for Change:** Describe in one paragraph the key benefits for a change you want to bring about. Address concerns while painting a compelling vision for the reasons behind the change. Explain what can happen if the change is made instead of dwelling on the negative things that can happen if the change isn't made. People want to see where the team is moving.

Day 19:

**Use A Variety of Communication Mediums:** Develop a communication plan that uses multiple media outlets (speaking, writing, video, intranet, focus groups, and bulletin boards). Don't just use the method that is most comfortable to you as a leader, but one that you can tailor to different groups people. Gen Yers might prefer to hear about a change initiate through texting. Baby boomers might want a face to face meeting. "I suggest", says Newlund, "to use all communication mediums when communication change; face to face meetings, video conferencing, email and print. This way everyone will get the message in the medium they prefer."

Day 20:

**Build Credibility:** Ask a team member to share results of a recent change initiative to senior managers. Instead of communicating the results yourself, give that task to a team member who helped implement it. You might give the overview, but then introduce a person who made it happen. It gives them exposure and helps build upcoming leaders.

Extraordinary leaders are not defined by titles or positions of power. Leadership is a process that starts with self-awareness and expands to include others in the development of their leadership. Good luck on your 30 days to better leadership.

To take another step forward to your leadership development, find more resources and sign up for a free webinar (first 20) at [www.missionfacilitators.com](http://www.missionfacilitators.com)