

David Campbell



David's passion for leading people started early in life and developed throughout his 20 years in the Navy. It has developed David into an outstanding executive coach and mentor. David has had many roles in his working life, from service in the Navy, to running the day to day affairs of a not-for-profit organization with over 1000 members, to Executive Director of a charity providing skills training to IT students nationwide.

He has also worked extensively in the Australian Public Service as a senior executive, in other leadership roles, and as an independent contractor.

David is skilled at “getting” where people are at. This is a natural gift that plays well into his leadership roles. He is regularly called on by training groups and organizations to provide presentations on leadership, self-awareness, conflict, and change, to name a few.

Today, David is co-founder of State Your Business, a corporate coaching and mentoring business providing support to business leaders and managers in both one-to-one and the group coaching / training space. Based in Australia, State Your Business works with clients all over the world.

Releasing the Leader Within You

By David Campbell

In memory of Ross Campbell 1929-2015

I am sure that we have all heard the old adage: “Leaders are not born, they are made.” I don’t hold with this statement in its strictest sense.

I believe that the potential for leadership is within each one of us. It is through being presented with and taking the opportunities in life that we learn and refine our leadership qualities. We have the rough edges knocked off through the experience of stepping out and taking the lead.

A Leader is defined (in the dictionary) as:

“a person who rules, guides, or inspires others”

According to that definition, we can all be leaders in some way, shape or form.

Can you see how a young child can inspire others to do great things? How a daughter can bring out the best in her dad as a protector and provider or inspire in her mother the instinct of nurture and love?

The truth is that the potential exists within every one of us to become an incredible leader, but the development of that potential takes time. Time is needed to:

Identify your passions;

Understand your personal vision and purpose;

Learn how to express who you are;

Learn how to use your unique strengths and skills; and

Learn how to express your purpose in your own unique way.

A leader does not need to be out the front as a manager or military officer. As an activity right now:

Take some time to think about people you know who have inspired you.

What did they do?

How did they inspire you?

What was their position in relation to you?

The inverted leadership paradigm

If you are anything like me, we have been taught throughout our lives that leaders are people in positions of great power and with great authority. We look to, and aspire to be like, the leaders we have observed during our lives.

While I was in the Navy, we used to say: “I would follow him/her into battle”, as a recognition of a person’s leadership qualities. We were willing to submit to such a person as our leader.

While there are many that I look to as examples of great leaders, I firmly believe that the strongest and most enduring leadership model we have is that of the biblical character of Jesus Christ. We can learn so much from a study of this servant-based leadership model. It is not dictatorial but is authoritative. It has been and remains the existing leadership model in the largest organization in the world. (The Christian Church)

He understood the principles of great leadership. The following thoughts are compiled from looking at the leadership style demonstrated by Jesus.

Leaders don’t go it alone

If you want to change the world, then choose a team of people and invest your time in teaching them. Then empower them, give them authority and release them to have a go at leading in their own right.

Leaders must know their stuff

You don't need to be the world expert, but you do need to "know what you know". That is, you must have a good grasp of who you are and what you are working towards, and "know what you don't know". In short, understand where there are gaps in your knowledge.

Leaders are visionary

Leaders need to have a vision. Not just in your head, you need to have your clear and concise vision written down so it can be passed onto the team. You need to know the vision inside and out. The vision must be burned into your very being, so that when the storms of life hit, your commitment to the vision will hold you on your course. Everything that you do should contribute to realizing the vision. Leaders remain focused on their vision.

One of the classic lines used in Naval Officer performance evaluations in relation to leadership is: "Sailors would only follow this officer out of idle curiosity." Such an officer is an example of a leader without a vision or the ability to communicate it.

There is a great proverb that reminds us "where there is no vision, the people perish". A leader must be able to communicate their vision.

Leaders teach others

A leader needs to be able to communicate the vision clearly. Before a leader can lead, people need to be able to gather around the cause or vision. This can only be done through clear communication.

Leaders gather followers

Good leaders will always attract followers however, they recruit their inner team. Good leaders need to surround themselves with good people. They should not settle for mediocrity. Looking forward (to the vision) they recruit to address skills gaps in order to

find the qualities needed to implement their vision. Good leaders want to build a team that has the same singular focus on the strategic vision laid out for them.

Leaders celebrate success

One of the greatest things you can do as a leader is to celebrate the achievement of goals. Celebration can range from a simple recognition of achievement to a full on party.

I read an article some years ago that encouraged the use of the single word “Done”. The idea was that when you complete a task, say out loud: “Done”. It has a psychological effect on you. It brings the task to a point of completion. It is a verbal celebration of the completion of the task. The saying of “Done” adds a life place holder, allowing you to move to the next task having completed that one.

I have used this strategy in my own life and as a business coach, and have encouraged my clients to use it. The sense of satisfaction from having completed a task and declaring it aloud is tangible. Why not give it a try?

The Leadership Challenge

Having read this far in the chapter, you now need to make a decision.

Am I a leader?

If you can answer “Yes”, then keep reading. If you still have questions, then I encourage you to re-read the first part of the chapter again. Decide that you are a leader.

Now that we have considered who can be a leader and the characteristics of a good leader, let’s consider where we go from here.

Every leader needs to develop strategies that will enable them to grow in both good and bad times. I now offer a number of strategies you can employ to strengthen and broaden your skills as a leader. This is not an exhaustive list but rather a good starting point.

Leaders need Persistence

The dictionary defines persistence as “the fact of continuing in an opinion or course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition.”

What’s the one common attribute high achievers share above anything else? PERSISTENCE. When they have a goal, they simply refuse to give up until they reach it – no matter what roadblocks life throws in their way.

In short, they are focused on the goal.

I found the following commentary about being focused on the goal to be very helpful.

“I’m not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way. Friends, don’t get me wrong: by no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I’ve got my eye on the goal. I’m off and running, and I’m not turning back. So let’s keep focused on that goal. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, you need to clear your vision. Now that we’re on the right track, let’s stay on it.” Paul (Saul of Tarsus)

I find this extremely motivating when I face what appears to be insurmountable opposition to the goal I have set myself.

As a leader, we need this kind of attitude when it comes to achieving results. An attitude that pushes through the inevitable roadblocks that get in the way of our progress.

Face what isn’t working

Good leaders take the time to review and reflect on the past. I was once told that if I lost the opportunity (in business), do not lose the lesson learned. If you are going to become more successful, you have to reject the desire to deny failure and face what isn’t/hasn’t working.

The first time you try something that doesn’t work, it is a learning opportunity. The second time is a mistake. The formula for achieving success is simple:

Have a go, review, adjust, have a go.

(Repeat until you succeed)

As you review, ask yourself: Are the goals simply too big? Are you lacking some essential skills? Do you need more support?

No matter how uncomfortable or challenging it might be, if you want to realize success, you must face what isn't working and do something to change that.

I like to ask: if money, time and skills were not an issue, what would you do next?

Choose one action you can take and then do it. Then take another action, and another, continuing until you reach the desired outcome.

Rise above your limiting beliefs

As a coach, I often come across clients who are not moving forward because deep down they don't think they are actually capable of achieving their goals – or don't feel deserving of success. These are limiting beliefs – negative thoughts.

If you have limiting beliefs or negative thoughts holding you back, take some time now to identify what these are and then transform them into an empowering belief. Using these four steps:

Write down the limiting belief or negative thought

Describe how the belief limits you

Decide how you would rather be, act, or feel

Create a turnaround statement that affirms your right to be, act, or feel this new way.

For example...

Limiting belief: I have to do everything by myself. Asking for help is a sign of weakness.

Turnaround statement: It's okay to ask for help. I am worthy of receiving all the support I need – and I know it will help me reach my goals faster.

Stay motivated

You control your motivation. It comes from within, knowing your vision and maintaining your passion – but sometimes an injection from an external source can nudge you forward. My business colleague sets aside half a day per week to learn something new. One of our clients sets aside “think time” for all his executive team. I schedule 30 minutes a day to firstly walk the dog and then sit and reflect on an article I might have read or a podcast I may have heard. The principle is to take some intentional time to allow external input to your level of motivation. Grow yourself, through extending yourself.

Find yourself a few minutes every day to improve yourself. It can give you the edge to excel in virtually any area of your life. If you devote more time to developing success-oriented thoughts and attitudes, you will reach your goals faster.

To get big results, take bold actions

There is usually some level of fear when you put yourself out there in a new project or venture. Most people let that fear stop them. They fail to take the necessary steps to achieve their dreams.

Even successful people feel the fear but they don’t let it keep them from moving forward. Fear needs to be acknowledged and harnessed. Using that experience enables you to take bold actions. By taking a leap of faith and facing your fear, you can transform your life.

It all comes down to pushing out the boundaries of your comfort zone. I know that when I went into business for myself, I was unsure of many things. I feared that I would not be able to succeed. I worried about what would happen if I failed. In reality, I could not fail if I didn’t try. But I would always be asking myself: “What could have been?”

Having the support of my wife and close friends (who believed in me) has enabled me to step out and I am now seeing the results of facing my fears.

Leaders need to be patient

Patience is a by-product of waiting. The question I pose is not about the waiting but about how we respond, act and perform during the waiting time. What is our attitude to waiting? Does waiting frustrate us or do we use the time to grow personally and professionally?

Consider if you will, a situation when you have been required to wait for long periods of time. Think about the experience. What did you feel? How did you react? What did you learn from the experience?

Waiting can be a hard experience

Many years ago, our daughter fell off a trampoline and broke her arm. Badly enough that it needed surgery to insert wires that would hold the bones in place until they healed. I felt frustration, anger and helplessness at a lack of control, among other things. These emotions experienced during the long wait in the ER for a decision to be made, then the wait while the surgery was conducted, then for her to come out of the anaesthetic, followed by months of convalescence while the arm healed, taught me that I needed to develop patience. I needed to allow the rough edges to be worn off so I could build my character.

You can get distracted in the waiting

If you are anything like me, you can be waiting for something and as the time goes by, you start to focus on other things.

A great example is waiting on the phone queue for service. The music so loved by the hearing impaired in the 1930's adds to the waiting experience. So, you put the phone on speaker and start to utilize your time gainfully doing something else. Suddenly, the person comes on the other end and in that instant you can't actually remember why you rang in the first place.

It is not that you have given up being patient, but life needs to go on and you need to address other issues while waiting. Then all of a sudden the thing you are waiting for happens and you have forgotten that you were actually waiting. You have lost the focus on your vision.

Don't let the wait frustrate

There is nothing more frustrating than having to wait when you don't know why. If someone waiting, the best thing you can do is communicate with them. Have you ever heard the line "Your call has progressed in the queue?" Your call is important to us and we will get to you as soon as we can." To me, that has to be one of the worst attempts at communicating with a client.

The point is that if you are waiting, don't let the wait frustrate. Often, there are valid reasons as to why the wait is happening and it won't be the fault of the person to whom you ultimately talk.

The hardest thing is seeing others pass you

Have you ever been in the queue at the movies? Standing in line to purchase your ticket then, a person arrives in the express lane. They get called over and served while you continue to wait.

At this point, remember that they have paid a price to get that service. A price that you have not paid.

The same holds with your business. You see similar businesses tracking past you and winning those contracts or saying how busy they are. Remember that they have paid a price. It may have been the hard yards of cold calls, the preparation of a proposal that they worked on until 2am. Whatever it is, they have paid a price. Are you willing to pay that same price to see the acceleration?

If we look at them, we start to compare ourselves to them and start to consider our own faults and failures. Remember, they have paid a price to move forward.

While you wait, things may have to die

We can really learn from waiting. It gives us time to think and reflect. Can I challenge you to take the opportunity the next time you are waiting to stop and reflect on your situation? Instead of allowing anger and frustration to rule you and your reaction, allow the experience to rub off the rough edges of your character. Learn from the experience. Allow yourself to be transformed by the renewing of your mind and the softening of your heart.

Next time you have to wait, take the time to reflect on what you can do to grow and increase during the waiting. Allow your leadership

style and potential to grow, develop and mature. Welcome the opportunity to develop greater character rather than an attitude of frustration and annoyance.

As I come to a close, I hope that you have been able to take some points for personal improvement from our discussion. You are a leader in the making. Having a vision for your life is the starting point to the leadership journey. The type of leader you become depends greatly on the experiences you have and the lessons you learned during your life journey. Having the right people around you to support you and help carry the vision is your responsibility. Remember, leaders grow their team. Allow the experiences of life to knock off the rough edges and grow you as an individual and leader. Above all, stay focused on the vision. It will carry you through the tough times and allow you to celebrate as you see goals achieved.

As a final thought, reflect back to my comment on Leaders celebrate success. Now that you have completed this chapter, say out loud: “DONE”.

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