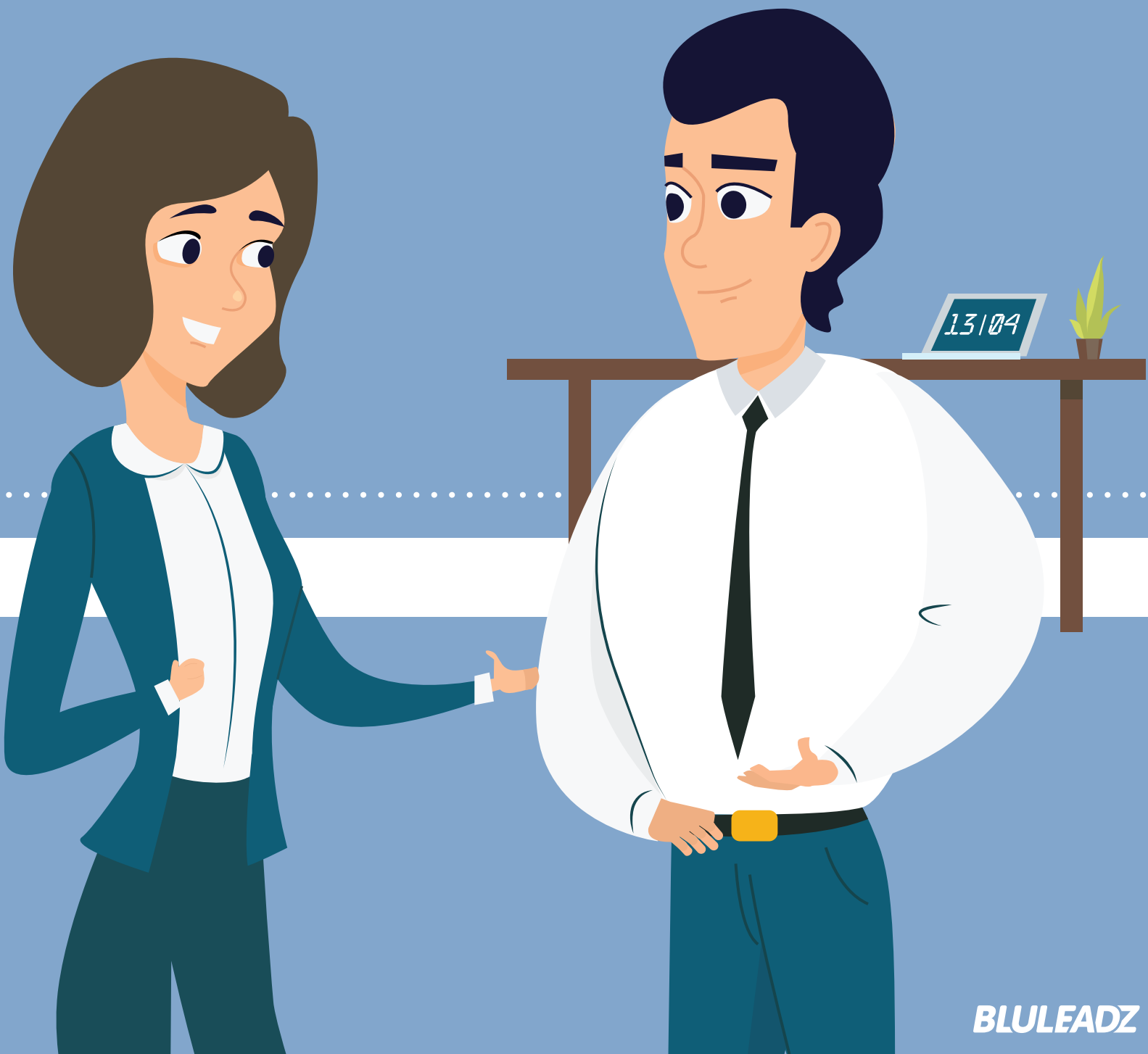


AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LEADERSHIP SKILLS

(And How To Improve on Them Daily)



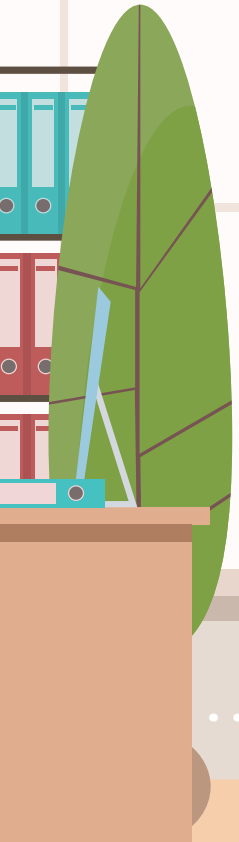



Leading a team is daunting.

But, no matter where you are in your leadership career, you can always find ways to build upon your leadership skills. While everyone develops their own unique leadership styles, there are certain skills that act as the foundation for every good leader.

But what leadership skills are essential to your long-term success?

Here are the top seven leadership skills you need to cultivate and tips on how you can improve upon them.



1. TRANSPARENCY

There are plenty of misconceptions that surround the idea of transparency as a skill. It is not disclosing every thought you have, and it's more than simply being honest.

Transparency is your ability to see and manage how you relate to the organization, your team, and yourself. In other words, you're not disguising information about business events or actions you're taking.

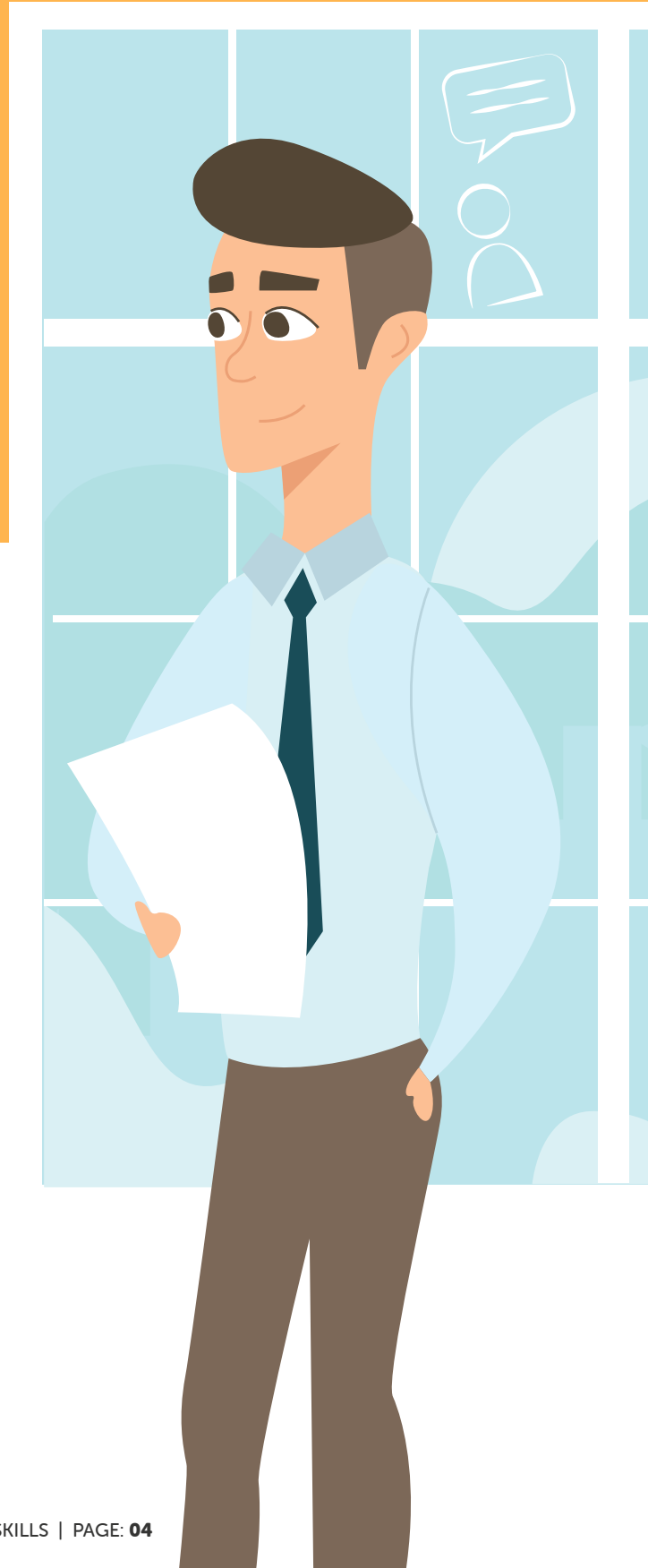


Transparency:

WHY IT MATTERS

Unfortunately, a lot of leaders think they need to maintain a level of secrecy in the workspace. But this causes a disconnect and can create a toxic culture that is fueled with constant worry.

On the other hand, a transparent culture develops trust between leadership and all levels of employees. This trust builds a better rapport, stronger relationships, and higher performing teams.



ACTIONS FOR BUILDING THIS SKILL:

- ✓ Host company-wide meetings on a regular basis to recap big events, highlight setbacks and obstacles, and disclose financial information to keep everyone in the loop.
- ✓ Encourage employee feedback in decision making in various ways, like hosting brainstorming sessions and conducting surveys.
- ✓ Distribute internal newsletters every week to detail big updates and highlight company news.

2. PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Personal accountability is the polar opposite of passing the buck. Many professionals struggle with this, attributing their responsibilities to others when they experience a setback or a failure.

Strong leaders take ownership of everything – their thoughts, actions, performance, and behaviors – no matter the result. Successes and failures alike are embraced equally.



Personal Accountability:

WHY IT MATTERS

Personal accountability matters for everyone in all areas of life. When leadership holds themselves accountable, they promote this behavior to employees. This, in turn, makes the team more productive and prevents toxic finger pointing.

It also shows that you're honest and willing to turn setbacks and oversights into learning opportunities. That confidence and authenticity fosters trust and shows your team the most important thing to focus on is solutions to problems, not who should take the fall.



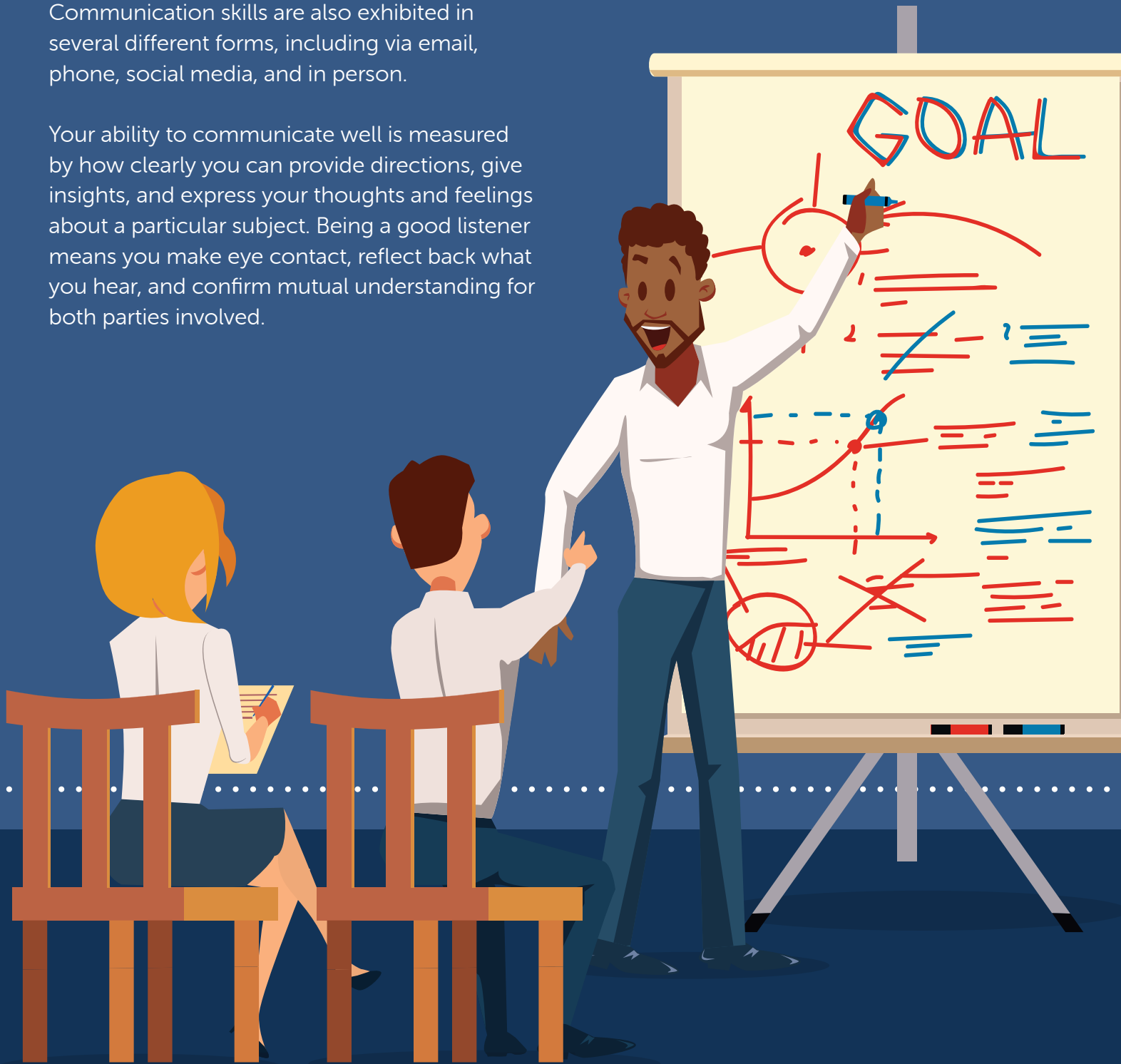
ACTIONS FOR BUILDING THIS SKILL:

- ✓ Enforce a strict “no blame game” rule in your office, and lead by example.
- ✓ Teach your team the five C’s of accountability:
 - Common purpose – the why behind tasks and projects
 - Clear expectations – define success and the who and what
 - Communication – describe how to achieve success and align everybody involved
 - Collaboration – work closely to monitor progress and coach others to adjust
 - Consequences – share results and assess them publicly
- ✓ Keep a journal of successes and setbacks and reflect on what you learn.

3. COMMUNICATION

This is a broad topic that consists of speaking, writing, questioning, and actively listening. Communication skills are also exhibited in several different forms, including via email, phone, social media, and in person.

Your ability to communicate well is measured by how clearly you can provide directions, give insights, and express your thoughts and feelings about a particular subject. Being a good listener means you make eye contact, reflect back what you hear, and confirm mutual understanding for both parties involved.

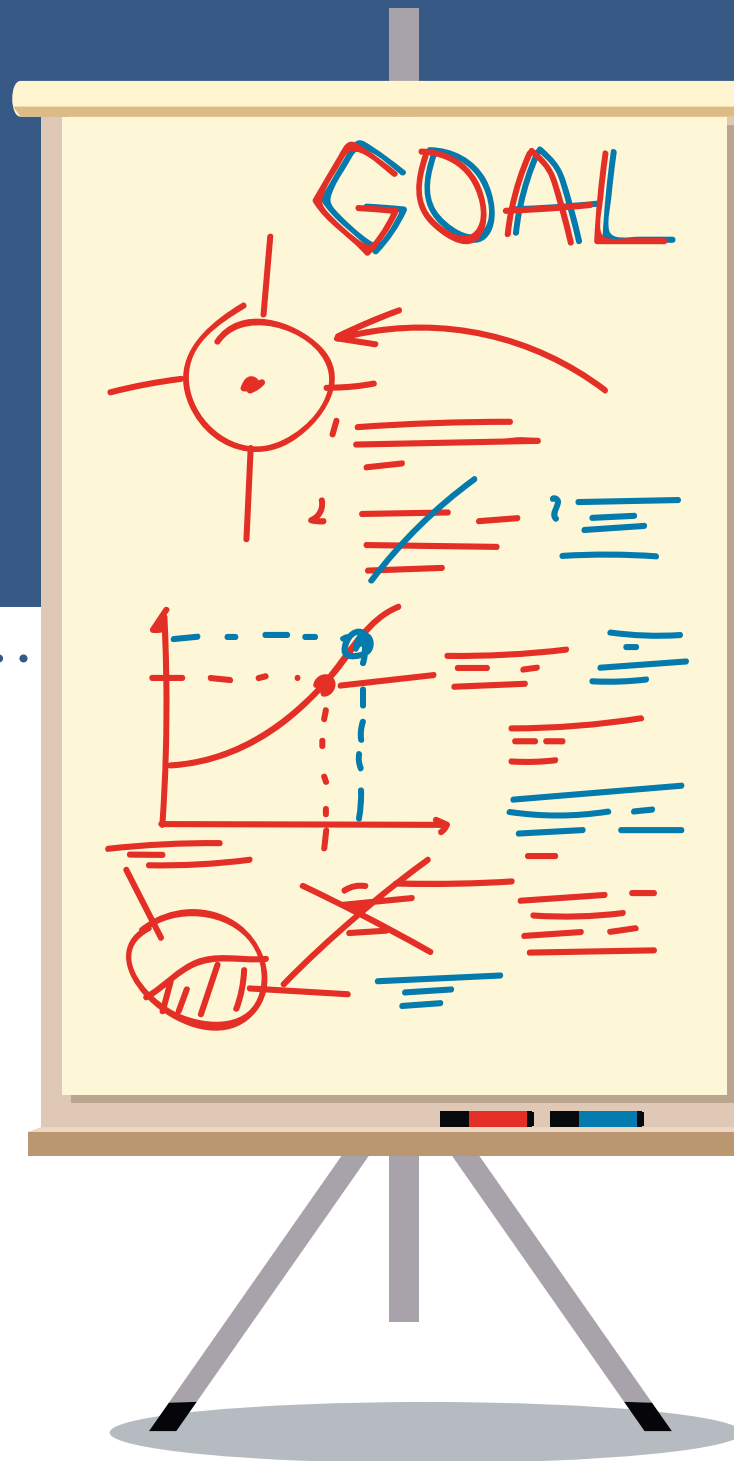


Communication:

WHY IT MATTERS

Leaders who struggle with communication run into a lot of issues. They aren't good at delegating tasks, providing clear direction, comprehending feedback from others, and being assertive.

As a leader, your success (and the success of your business) relies heavily on how well you can clearly articulate short-term and long-term goals. You also act as a coach to many. As an effective communicator, you're well-equipped to provide performance evaluations to help your employees learn and grow with you.



ACTIONS FOR BUILDING THIS SKILL:

- ✓ Host weekly recap meetings where you discuss ongoing initiatives and explore the progress your team is making on big picture goals.
- ✓ Schedule regular "office hours" where employees are open to come talk to you about anything.
- ✓ Join professional organizations to attend events where you can network, attend communication workshops, and become a member of Toastmasters.

4. MOTIVATION

Every action your team takes requires a reason behind it. This is where motivation plays a vital role. Motivation is simply the internal and external factors that spark energy and desire from your team to commit to their job.

Factors of motivation include the incentive or reward tied to a goal, expectations set, and the intensity of desire. As a leader, you can fuel motivation and inspire your team to achieve objectives.



Motivation:

WHY IT MATTERS

When you set ambitious goals for your business, you need your team to feel ambitious too. This is why leaders who can motivate teams to go above and beyond are usually at the helm of growing businesses.

Possessing the ability to motivate and inspire helps you build a human, impactful connection with employees on all levels. Your team gets excited and feels passionate when you can motivate them on a consistent basis. Plus, a motivating leader boosts employee confidence, reduces turnover, drives productivity, and ensures high levels of employee engagement.



ACTIONS FOR BUILDING THIS SKILL:

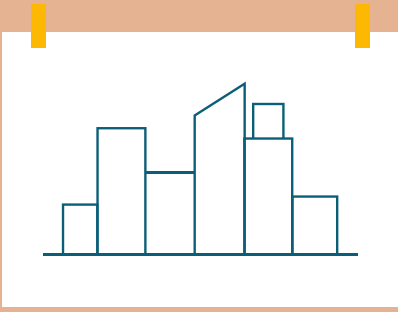
- ✓ Create an employee recognition program that systematically praises those who go above and beyond and accomplish something big.
- ✓ Incentivize learning opportunities, like completing a certification, and give each role a development roadmap.
- ✓ Provide coaching and mentoring opportunities to help employees pursue their interests and build skills they want to develop.

5. CREATIVITY

Generally speaking, creativity is simply the practice of turning new ideas into reality. Artists are often the first types of people who come to mind when you think about creative professionals, but creativity lives in most leaders.

A strong leader will be able to think outside the box and come up with new and unique ways to accomplish goals and overcome obstacles. They can find hidden patterns, look at the world in unique ways, and draw connections between seemingly unrelated ideas. This leads to innovative problem solving.





Creativity:

WHY IT MATTERS

In the world of leadership, most decisions you face don't have a clear answer. This is where creativity comes in handy. You're not going to be given clear cut routes to take. You're going to need to apply creativity to how you make decisions and how you develop your work ethic.

When you're a creative leader, you're well-equipped to think critically and analytically, embrace diverse perspectives, develop and share a clear vision, and exhibit good foresight. This kind of leader fosters company growth and encourages others to also be creative.



ACTIONS FOR BUILDING THIS SKILL:

- ✓ Host cross-team brainstorming sessions to get new ideas flowing.
- ✓ Foster a creative environment with office decor and design and wellness-focused initiatives (like walking meetings and standing desks).
- ✓ Allot time for yourself and your team to pursue passion projects – a hobby that helps reduce stress and provide a creativity boost.

6. PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

This is an umbrella term defining your ability to work with others in both a one-on-one and group setting. While we already covered skills that align with people management, like motivation and communication, there's a lot more depth to it.

Your level of people management skills is based on how well you delegate, inspire, provide and promote growth opportunities, manage teams, recruit and onboard talent, and keep workloads balanced throughout your organization.



People Management:

WHY IT MATTERS

Your people are your most valuable aspect of your company. Without a team of A players, your business will stagnate and crash quickly. The better you are at building teams and keeping your staff learning and healthy, the more sustainable your company growth is.

A major aspect of people management is being able to keep your talent happy and healthy. Stress is a natural byproduct of work. No matter the capacity or source of stress, you need to be able to identify these kinds of internal issues and create a wellness-focused, positive culture. Remember, culture isn't just a fluffy concept; it's a business strategy.

ACTIONS FOR BUILDING THIS SKILL:

- ✓ Build a wellness program that incorporates healthy initiatives, like step competitions, fitness breaks, and sleep hygiene training.
- ✓ Emphasize your availability to chat by promoting an open-door policy.
- ✓ Host daily huddles with teams to address ongoing issues, like overwhelming workloads, and detail current priorities.



7. DECISION MAKING

The definition of decision-making skills is obvious, but it can't be overstated how important it is for leaders to master this cognitive process. It usually starts with problem analysis, where information is gathered on what is causing particular issues and a definition of the problem is clearly articulated.

Once you understand a specific problem, you're able to set objectives, outline and evaluate potential actions, assess possible consequences, and then take decisive action. As a leader, you'll be going through these processes multiple times a day for decisions of all sizes.





Decision Making:

WHY IT MATTERS

Great leaders should obviously be able to make decisions, both easy and difficult. A decisive leader clears the path and ensures everyone follows in the same direction.

But the best leaders won't make all decisions alone. They often involve others to gather various points of view. Otherwise, they might be steering the ship in a way that's been guided by personal biases and not necessarily with the right insights.

ACTIONS FOR BUILDING THIS SKILL:

- ✓ Adopt a decision-making technique you can apply in a group setting, such as:
 - Consensus decision making – The majority approves a course of action, and the minority agrees to follow.
 - Participative decision making – The authority opens the decision-making process to a group to encourage collaboration.
 - Dotmocracy – Use a specific kind of dotmocracy sheet to allow participants to “dot” ideas they like, and then the idea with the most dots is the chosen course of action.
- ✓ Encourage direct feedback following initiatives and projects your whole team decided on to give everyone a chance to share what they learned.
- ✓ Teach your team to exhibit your company's core values and to follow your mission statement because your values, your mission, and your vision guide important decisions.

BECOME A BETTER LEADER TODAY

It goes without saying, but this list would not be complete without mentioning pure intelligence. Leaders who are able to analyze information and make good decisions are more effective than their counterparts.

The leader not only needs the mental horsepower to interpret information, but they also need the personality and confidence to trust in the decisions they make and follow through with them.

With all these leadership skills and actionable takeaways, you're ready to become a better leader. But more importantly, you're also ready to take your company to new heights.

