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# BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

## Five Quick Ways to Improve Your Leadership in 2020

By Brian Pauley

If you are reading this, you most likely desire to be more effective in 2020. If you are in a leadership role, it is important that you strive toward this goal not every year, but every day. Increasing your effectiveness doesn't happen automatically. You must be intentional about it.

This sounds simple, but as you reflect on last year, you may feel you could have done a better job. I believe one of the main reasons for this is that we stretch too far and overcomplicate our desire to improve. For example, when setting goals at work, I often see people come up with five to 10 goals when excelling at three to five would yield far better results.

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Here are five simple steps that every leader can take to be more effective in 2020.

### 1. BECOME A "POSITIVE WARRIOR"

I seem to be hearing much about positivity in leadership nowadays. That excites me because positivity is a leadership fundamental. I love the term "positive warrior," which I heard from author and speaker Jon Gordon, who focuses on positivity in success strategies.

Gordon defines the term as "someone who demonstrates positivity, belief and courage; someone whose actions positively impact others." I especially like the last part of the definition because as a leader, it is important that you positively impact

others. Without that, you are just doing a job. Be intentional here and find ways each week to have a positive impact on those under your leadership. Soon you'll find your influence growing by leaps and bounds.

### 2. PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Gratitude has become a big focus of mine lately. In fact, it is one of my daily five things to focus on as a person and a leader. As I have become more focused on this for myself, I have become aware of how absent it is in many situations.

Let's face it, everyone wants to feel valued and appreciated. As a leader, you need to champion that. We have so much to be grateful for. Gratitude is like a muscle: The more you work it, the stronger it becomes. This year, be plentiful with your thanks, tell your team how much you appreciate them and look for whatever other ways you can show your gratitude for the opportunity to be a leader in your organization.

### 3. AVOID THE BUSY TRAP

I recently worked to schedule a meeting with someone several weeks out regarding a top priority. This person was available for one 30-minute window that entire week. If this was top priority, shouldn't most of the week have been available?

Unfortunately, this is all too common in today's busy business world. Our priorities for the day are driven by what has filled our calendar. Instead, our calendar should be filled with what we determine to be our priorities. Take time each morning to determine your top one or two priorities and ensure there is time on your calendar for them. Do this and you will find yourself more effective and less busy and tired.

### 4. CULTURE > STRATEGY

Ask for your organization's strategic plan and you'll get something. Ask for the culture plan and you'll likely get nothing. But, as leadership expert John Maxwell says, "culture eats strategy for lunch." Why? Because without the right culture, the support system to accomplish the strategy won't be there.

My suggestion here is not to go in for a massive overhaul, but instead to find small things you can do each week to emphasize culture. Over time, you can become a culture-centric leader with much more strategic success.

### 5. BE GROWTH ORIENTED, NOT GOAL ORIENTED

It is likely that you have already set your performance goals for yourself and your team at work. Goals are important as a way to measure whether the year was a success. However, I believe this process usually leaves out something just as important: growth.



I like to use a sports analogy to illustrate what this means. Let's say you are the manager of an NFL football team. Your goal is probably to win your division or maybe even the Super Bowl. This gives your team something to focus on and strive for. But many things outside of your control, such as injuries or another team going 16–0, can get in the way of your goal. Not winning the division or Super Bowl can leave you and the team deflated. If instead the focus is on getting better each day, helping your teammates, getting stronger and so forth, you not only get better, but you put success within your control.

By focusing on these quick yet effective ways to improve your leadership, you will be amazed at the results when you reflect back on the coming year! ■



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