

Living the 21 Laws of Leadership

The Law of the Inner Circle A Leader's Potential is Determined by Those Closest to Him

*"We begin by imagining that we are giving to them;
we end by realizing that they have enriched us."*

—Pope John Paul II

Application Guide

When someone says "The Chicago Bulls," we all immediately think Michael Jordan. He is the best, but taking nothing away from that, he can not win championships alone. The bulls have a tight inner circle that makes them as great as they are. The core of the inner circle consists of Phil Jackson, Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, and Dennis Rodman. The other players are important and gifted athletes, but the inner circle makes the magic.

When someone says America's preacher, we all think Billy Graham. God chose and gifted Dr. Graham for world evangelism and has used him in an extraordinary way for some 50 years, but Billy himself would tell you he could not and did not do it alone. His success has come through a fantastic inner circle consisting of: Ruth Bell Graham, Grady Wilson, Cliff Barrows and George Beverly Shea. Most recently he has included his son, Franklin. Hundreds of devoted people are part of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, but the inner circle has been the faithful core who has made the difference.

How about you? Who is in your inner circle? Are they the dream team that you want and need? Is the *Law of the Inner Circle* working in your favor?

My inner circle story will be helpful to you as you review and develop your own. My longest tenure in any one organization was 14 years as the Senior Pastor of Skyline Church near San Diego, California, beginning 1981.

The church had a great history, and I knew it had a great future, but it was time for a "change in leadership" said the founding pastor of 27 years, Orval Butcher. Dr. Butcher had touched thousands of people with his leadership, and the church had a strong, nationally-recognized reputation. Butcher was a godly man (still is!) and a wonderful pastor, but the church had plateaued. It had reached the large size of 1,000 attenders but had not grown in years.

After accepting the position, I knew my first task as a leader would be to re-structure the inner circle. I met with each of the staff members to assess their abilities and discovered that they were good people, but not strong leaders. No matter what I did with them, they would not be able to take the organization to the place we needed to go.

Mentally, I divided the staff into three groups according to their ability to lead and deliver results. It was a three year process to completely change the full time pastoral staff. The results speak for themselves, the church took off with phenomenal growth. I was the key leader, but I did not, nor could not have done it alone. My inner circle made the difference.

Today, the *Law of the Inner Circle* continues to carry top significance as I lead my four companies under the INJOY umbrella. My four presidents are Dick Peterson, Dave Sutherland, Ron McManus and Chris Fryer; my assistant — Linda Eggers and my long term friends and colleagues Dan Reiland and Tim Elmore; Charlie Wetzel my writer and my brother Larry are all part of my inner circle. As I grow, so does my inner circle. I am raising up a younger generation of inner circle team members

such as Dave Johnson, Kevin Small and Larry Figueroa. Of course I can not forget my good buddy Jim Dornan and my best friend in the whole world, my wife Margaret.

I. Assessment

The following questions will give you insight as to how well you are living the *Law of the Inner Circle*.

- A. Have you identified your inner circle?
- B. Is your inner circle better together than if they are on their own?
- C. Is your inner circle getting the job done well?
- D. Are you achieving more because of your inner circle?
- E. Are you focusing more on your priorities because of your inner circle?
- F. Do those in your inner circle have influence over others in the organization?
- G. Do those in your inner circle develop other leaders in your organization?
- H. Have you identified a strong leader who you want in your inner circle? Do you have a plan to recruit them?
- I. Is your inner circle committed to you, and the vision?
- J. Does your inner circle provide you wise counsel and creative ideas?
- K. Does your inner circle enjoy and get along with each other?
- L. Has your inner circle been with you longer than 3 years?

II. Application

Every leader's potential is determined by the people closest to him. Whether you lead a church, business, or a little league baseball team, your organization will never grow beyond the combined talent and abilities of the inner circle.

I am interested in your success. The following principles will help you develop your inner circle. Perhaps, however, you are studying this material and thinking, "I am not the top dog, so I do not have an inner circle." Or, "I am not the top dog, I am in the inner circle, but do not have one myself." Every leader needs to develop an inner circle! Yours may be smaller and less complicated if you are not the head of the organization, but remember, if you can do it all yourself, you are not reaching your potential, and therefore, neither is the organization you serve.

Your Inner Circle:

A. What does it take to get the best?

1. Possess _____ and _____.

This is the honey that draws the winners to you. You must know where you are headed and know what you want to accomplish before anyone will *want* to be part of your inner circle.

No one will ever have more passion for your organization than you do. You set the bar! When it comes to vision, you are the one who dreams about the future in such a way that others want to hook up with you to help make it happen.

2. Be _____ at what you do.

There is no substitute for competence. Either you are good at what you do or you are not. The good news is that you can get better, and the better you are, the better people you will gather into your inner circle.

This does not mean that you have all the technical competencies your inner circle may have, but you are the best leader.

3. Set high _____.

Set the standards high. If you set standards low, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to raise them. There is however, a big difference between low and slow. You can set the standards high and give the less experienced ones time to rise up to the level of expectation.

4. Make tough _____.

This is why you get the big bucks! You may have to do a tough firing, or even fire yourself! You may have to make very difficult budget cuts or maybe even move an entire company across the country!

5. Compensate _____.

You get what you pay for, so pay well! This does not mean being extravagant, but take care of your top people . . . or someone else will! ***The people who cost you are not the ones you pay the most; they are the ones who do not produce.***

Your Inner Circle:

B. How to select the best — 5 key criteria:

1. _____

You can not change their basic character much, so you better select well up front. Issues such as:

- ✓ Are they honest?
- ✓ Do they show courage?
- ✓ Are they loyal?
- ✓ Are they compassionate?
- ✓ Do they value people?
- ✓ Is their integrity bullet-proof?

2. _____

This area covers their track record.

- ✓ Are they productive?
- ✓ Are they highly skilled in their field?
- ✓ Do they get the job done extremely well?
- ✓ Are they innovative?
- ✓ Can they solve problems?
- ✓ Do they have good people skills?
- ✓ Can they make a distinct and significant contribution to your organization?

3. _____

This area measures their passion and devotion.

- ✓ Are they hungry to grow personally?
- ✓ Are they hungry to learn more professionally?
- ✓ Do they exhibit a high energy level?
- ✓ Are they willing to go the extra mile?
- ✓ Are they in it for what they can get or what they can give?

4. _____

This is the area of personality and team connection.

- ✓ Do they have a sense of humor?
- ✓ Do they take themselves too seriously?

- ✓ Do they have a positive attitude?
- ✓ Do they connect with the culture and mix of your inner circle?

5. _____

This area covers their potential.

- ✓ Do they have potential to grow?
- ✓ Are they intelligent?
- ✓ Can they keep up with the pace of your organization?
- ✓ Do they have a sense of the "big picture?"
- ✓ Are they free from major personal problems?

Your Inner Circle:

C. What does it take to keep the best?

1. Invest in your inner circle's _____.

An entire chapter is devoted to this under the *Law of Reproduction*. Very briefly, you are the coach and mentor of your inner circle. You are responsible to see to it that your inner circle gets the training and development they need.

2. Communicate _____ clearly.

Even the best of your eagles need and want to know what is expected of them. They do not want to be told how to do it, but the expectations, at least in the broadest scope must be laid out. It is also wise for them to know the expectations you have for all the members of the inner circle.

3. Share the _____ and _____.

Keeping the "gravy" for yourself is a great way to lose your inner circle. When your organization does well, share the rewards generously. If you share the credit and rewards with your inner circle, when lean times come, they are much more likely to stick by your side.

4. Cultivate a positive and _____ oriented environment.

This is a key responsibility for the senior leader. The inner circle needs an environment that is conducive to growth and positive in nature. As the inner core matures they are partly responsible to help create this environment, but you must always lead the way. One of the important ingredients to the right environment is your presence. You can not be gone all the time and expect the organization to reflect your values and standards.

5. Create opportunities for their _____ and _____.

Winners do not like to become stagnant in their personal growth. They get restless when there is no room to advance. Do whatever it takes to make sure you do not lose any of your best people because they got bored or stuck in a rut beneath their potential. If it will take some time for the next opportunity, approach them and talk about it. It is also wise for you to share the load by giving your inner circle room to create some of their own opportunities for advancement.

6. Clear a path for _____ for your inner circle.

One of the primary responsibilities of the senior leader is to clear the way so your best players can run with the ball. Tear down red tape, get support staff, keep the board of directors off their back etc. This is the behind the scenes work that you may not get much credit for, but nonetheless it is critical to the success of your inner circle.

7. Compensate for _____.

Pay your inner circle the highest salary you can, but only for their contribution to the organization. Merit is the key. On rare occasions someone's presence is worth compensation, but that is the exception. For example, if Billy Graham were to join my team today, all he would have to do is show up to earn a pay check, but the list of "Graham's" is short.

8. Insist on production from the _____ team.

You only as good as your weakest link. You can not afford a weak link in the chain within your inner circle. If the others have to pick up the load for the weak links, eventually the morale of the whole team will be effected. Everyone must carry their own weight, and be productive and effective in their respective areas of responsibility.

9. Encourage _____ and _____.

You do not want a bunch of "yes men" and "yes women." Your inner circle must be comprised of strong individuals who will speak up on behalf of the best interest of the organization. This begins with you. You set the stage by giving permission for the inner circle to "speak up and be heard." If you intimidate, belittle or overpower, your best people will either clam up or eventually leave.

10. Empower your _____.

This is so important that an entire chapter is devoted to the topic. For now let me state the basic principle: grant authority equal to the level of responsibility.

III. Action Assignment

Evaluate your inner circle. After what you have gleaned and learned from the book and application guide, is your inner circle made up of the right people and are they performing at the top levels? Are you performing at your peak because of your inner circle? Do you enjoy being with your inner circle? Is your organization further ahead because of your inner circle?

Write down 3-5 specific changes you need to make to improve the effectiveness your inner circle. Candidly talk this through with your inner circle.