

Living the 21 Laws of Leadership

The Law of Process **Leadership Develops Daily, Not in a Day**

*"The heights of great men reached and kept,
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upwards in the night. "*

-Winston Churchill

Application Guide

The old saying "Rome was not built in a day" is true. Developing yourself as a leader is a life-long process. At fifty-one years old, I have been growing as a leader for over 30 years and plan to grow for another 30!

One of my favorite stories in chapter three on the Law of Process is about President Theodore Roosevelt. He unquestionably lived out the law of process over his entire life.

Roosevelt was an outspoken man of action and advocate of the vigorous life. While in the White House, he was known for regular boxing and judo sessions, vigorous horseback rides, and long strenuous hikes.

At different times in his life, Roosevelt was a cowboy in the wild west, an explorer and big-game hunter, and a rough-riding cavalry officer in the Spanish-American War. As the vice-presidential candidate in 1900, he gave a whopping 673 speeches and traveled 20,000 miles while campaigning for President McKinley. Years after his presidency, while preparing to deliver a speech in Milwaukee, Roosevelt was shot in the chest by a would-be assassin. With a broken rib and a bullet in his chest, Roosevelt insisted on delivering his one hour speech before allowing himself to be taken, to the hospital.

Roosevelt was a tough leader, both physically and mentally, but he did not start that way. America's cowboy president was born in Manhattan to a prominent and wealthy family. As a child, he was smallish and of ill health. He had debilitating asthma, possessed very poor eyesight, and was strikingly thin. When he was twelve, Roosevelt's father told him, 'You have the mind, but you have not the body, and without the help of the body the mind cannot go as far as it should. You must make the body.'

Roosevelt began investing time every *day* building his body as well as his mind, and he did that for the rest of his life. He worked out with weights, hiked, ice-skated, hunted, rowed, boxed and rode horseback.

Roosevelt did not become a great leader overnight, either. His journey to the presidency was one of slow continual growth. As he served in various positions, ranging from New York City Police Commissioner to President of the United States, he kept learning and growing. He continued to improve himself, and in time became a strong leader. For Roosevelt, the process was never over, he lived this law until his last breath.

Roosevelt could have become comfortable and coasted through his presidency, instead, look at some of his amazing accomplishments, any one of which would have been noteworthy for a presidential reign. Under his leadership, the United States emerged as a world power. He helped the country develop a first-class Navy. He built the Panama Canal. He negotiated peace between Russia and Japan, winning a Nobel Peace Prize in the process. When people questioned his leadership — since he had become President when McKinley was assassinated — he campaigned and was reelected by the largest majority of any President.

When Roosevelt completed his term as President in 1909, he immediately traveled to Africa where he led a scientific expedition sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute. In 1913 he co-led a group to explore the uncharted River of Doubt in Brazil. It was a great learning adventure he said he could not pass up. "It was my last chance to be a boy," he later said. He was 55 years old.

On January 6, 1919, at his home in New York, Theodore Roosevelt died in his sleep. At the time, then-Vice-President Marshall said, "Death had to take him sleeping, for if Roosevelt had been awake, there would have been a fight." When they removed him from his bed, they found a book under his pillow. Up to the very end, Roosevelt was still striving to learn and improve himself. He was still practicing the Law Of Process.

I. Assessment

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

A. The secret of process is keeping the big picture in mind, but ever paying attention to each step along the way.

1. What are the key events or "defining moments" that have most shaped and influenced who you are today (both the positive and the negative)?
2. Are you intentional (proactive) or are you more random (reactive) in your approach to life?
3. What investments are you making today that will be fruitful in the future?
4. Are you a better leader today than you were one year ago? If yes, why?
5. What have you learned in the last 6 months that have made you a better leader?
6. How have you applied what you have learned in the last 6 months?

B. Personal Habits (health, religious, family etc.)

1. What personal habits in your life are helping you become a better leader?
2. What personal habits in your life are hindering you from becoming a better leader?
3. What one personal habit do you need to begin to become a better leader?

C. Professional Disciplines (study, new relationships, innovations, risk, etc.)

** The secret of your success is found in your daily routine.*

1. What professional disciplines are you keeping that advance your leadership development?
2. What professional disciplines do you need to begin in order to advance your leadership development? (List no more than 3.)

II. Application

The following guidelines and practical principles will help you develop the Law of Process.

A. Set your mind and your heart on _____ momentum.

Whether you call it a goal, vision or plan makes little difference. The key is moving forward, one step at a time, one day at a time, intentionally, over a long period of time.

It is not important that you are able to see the end of your life's journey at this point, none of us really know the final score before the game is over. It is important that you know the current score and continue adding points to your account in life. Michael Jordan never focused on how many points he would have at the end of a game, but he was fiercely focused on continually scoring more points throughout the game. This, is the *Law of Process*. Jordan also knew that to score more points during the game, he must practice for hours before the game! This is also the **Law of Process**. Together, this combination wins games, builds companies, grows churches, and creates success in life.

In contrast is the law of the "Big Event." This is not an irrefutable law of leadership! The law of the big event says go to the game without practicing first, or go to the board meeting without thinking through your strategy, or enter the courtroom without preparing your defense, or standing in the pulpit without investing hours in your sermon. Without the process the results are devastating. The examples so far are those of immediate processing. There is also the bigger picture of process.

The big picture of the *Law of Process* teaches us not to focus only on the game at hand, but the whole season. For example, not just the bottom line for this quarter, but the entire fiscal year. Another example is that of church attendance for the entire year, compared to last year rather than week by week. Whether you are an athlete, business person, or minister, the *Law of Process* requires you to look at the big picture of progress.

As you study the big picture of progress, think through the following:

- Are you moving forward?
- What brought you this far?
- Are you satisfied with your current situation?
- What is working?
- What is not working?
- What must you do to improve your situation?

* *The Law of Process is all about the daily steps necessary to become a better leader and continue moving forward. Set your sights forward, and take action every day.*

B. Create your own personal "insiders" _____

- * *The Law of Process, though lonely at times, is never realized alone. It is lonely because while others are "playing" you continue to invest your time into personal growth. It is not realized alone because no one is so self-sufficient that they can monitor their own progress completely. It is like walking in the forest, without a guide or a compass you will walk in circles.*
- * *It is important that you pull together a small group of people, perhaps 3-5, who become your "insiders." These people you trust with your life and give them permission to speak candidly with you about any part of your life, in particular, the progress that you are making.*

How this group is configured is not as important as having a group. They may be colleagues, family, friends or a combination of all three and then some. They may live in your city or across the country. They may be experts in your field or know nothing about your field, but they know you, and they care about you! You may meet in person, or by phone, or write letters. You may meet monthly or twice a year. You can see how flexible this is, but you must have an "insiders" group to help guide you through the process. By the way, you may not always agree with their input, and not always follow their advice, but if you have the right group you will always sharpen your thinking and improve your personal growth.

C. Avoid the _____ like a plague.

The comfort zone is the killer of process. We all grow at different rates and speeds, and our growth is greater in some seasons of our life than others. Celebrating victories and smelling the roses is important to health and enjoying life, but if you stay there very long — the lethal weapon of comfort will destroy the process. While the damage may not be permanent, in this day and age of rapid change and fluid innovation, you do not want to get caught "sleeping at the wheel."

I do not want to paint a picture of a paranoid, workaholic who is caught in the performance trap. I do want to communicate that if you are still smelling the roses long after the pedals have dried up and withered, you are in danger of the comfort zone. If you do not cultivate the rose garden, there will be no more roses to smell.

Being in the comfort zone does not mean you are not working hard. You may be working very hard. You can be in the comfort zone and be working into the wee hours of every morning. *The comfort zone is more about doing the same things, with the same people, in the same ways, over and over again. Watch for this and stay out of this danger zone.*

D. Learn from your mistakes.

Mistakes are one of the greatest learning tools available. Mistakes are great, as long as you do not make the same one twice. If you are not making mistakes, you are not stretching yourself enough, and thereby, cutting short the process by which you develop as a leader.

You do not plan to make a mistake, but you will improve your plans because of your mistakes. I call this failing forward!

- What mistakes have you made in the last 90 days?
- What did you learn?
- What will you do differently?

E. Pursue relationships with people who stretch you and encourage you.

All my life I have pursued relationships with people who stretch me as a leader and as a person. I am grateful for all the wonderful input I have received over the years, so much so, that now I invest a large portion of my life into stretching others.

** I have learned some things along the way that may be helpful to you as you pursue others to help you learn and grow.*

- Pursue people who are further down the road of life's experience³ than you are.
- Pursue others who have experienced success in your area of interest.
- Pursue others who are interested in helping you.
- Pursue others only if their character matches their competency.
- Be willing to learn on their terms and on their schedule.

- Be willing to spend money to learn and grow.
- Prepare yourself, and respect their time by writing down questions to ask them.
- If you will be in their presence, but not able to ask questions, jot down a few key thoughts anyway.
- Always express your gratitude for the ways in which they help you.
- Pass on what you learned, gained, experienced to someone else.
- As soon as you are able, make a contribution into their life. Do not worry about big and small, gratitude is a state of the heart not an amount or monitored on a scorecard.
- Make a commitment to do this all your life, it is the process that counts!

F. Practice connecting and integrating what you learn and experience.

Independent learning experiences are not nearly as valuable as connected and integrated learning experiences. In other words, we learn much about one idea, project or field from what appears to be a completely unrelated area. For example, I just read a basic but interesting little book that compared church growth to the art of growing healthy bonsai trees! What in the world do the two have in common? After reading the book, I saw they had much in common!

How about this one? Pigs and humans! Nothing in common? . . . Surgeons are using pig valves in human heart operations! It may be politics and music or science and business. Mix it up and see what you can learn!

Another interesting example is the connection of attending a ball game or a concert in which the fans exuberantly express their every thought, feeling and emotion in a number of wild ways — and a church worship service where it seems like every possible measure is taken to hold everything inside as the people worship God. A wise pastor will integrate the two experiences to learn what he can to bring life into his/her worship service. (I am not suggesting hot dogs and Cracker Jacks! . . . but then again . . .)

The picture I want to paint for you is that of a funnel. The narrow end represents the point of application in your life experience. The large end, however, is open to a great deal more than you can handle at one time, and as it pours down through the focal point of your personal application, you “mix it up” and benefit from the combined variety of input.

G. Never give up.

My friend Zig Ziglar tells the story of how he was broke and in debt at age 45. Today he is one of the most successful Christian businessmen I know. He chose not to give up!

No matter where you are in life, or what you face, giving up is not the answer. Whether you are 22 or 72 you have hope and potential.

A 98 year old woman in Massachusetts named Jean just graduated from High School, after a 90 year break! At 8 years old she left school to help her parents raise the other kids. She is now considering college! Jean understands process!!

III. Action Assignment

The Law of Process, like most, if not all of the laws, is a lifetime commitment. The key is to discover how you are doing now through the assessment questions, and then select one of the seven areas from the application section to focus your time, effort and energy. You can return over and over again to develop other areas in this application guide.

Assessment - Personal Habits

Example: Q. 'What personal habits do you need to begin to become a better leader?'

A. "More thinking time."

Application - Guidelines & Practical Principles

1. Set your mind and heart on forward momentum.
2. Create your own personal insiders group.
3. Avoid the comfort zone like the plague.
4. Learn from your mistakes.
5. Pursue relationships with people who will stretch you and encourage you.
6. Practice connecting and integrating what you learn and experience.
7. Never give up.