

## Living the 21 Laws of Leadership

### *The Law of Empowerment* Only Secure Leaders Give Power to Others

*“The confidence which we have in ourselves engenders  
the greatest part of that which we have in others.”*

*—La Rochefoucauld*

## Application Guide

Henry Ford was the great innovator in the automobile industry and a legend in American business history. In 1903, he co-founded the Ford Motor Company with the belief that the future of the automobile lay in putting it within the reach of the average American.

Henry Ford carried out that vision with the Model T, and it changed the face of twentieth-century American life. By 1914, Ford was producing nearly 50% of all automobiles in the United States. The Ford Motor Company looked like the great American success story.

However, all of Ford's story is not about positive achievement, and one of the reasons was that he did not embrace the *Law of Empowerment*. Henry Ford was so in love with his Model T that he never wanted to change or improve it — nor did he want anyone else to do it. One day when a group of his designers surprised him by presenting him with the prototype of an improved model, Ford ripped its doors off the hinges and proceeded to destroy the car with his bare hands.

For almost twenty years, the Ford Motor Company offered only one design, the Model T, which Ford had himself developed. It was not until 1927 that he finally — grudgingly — agreed to offer a new car to the public. They produced the Model A, but it was incredibly far behind its competitors in technical innovations. Despite its early head start and the incredible lead it had over its competitors, Ford's market share kept shrinking. By 1931, it was down to only 28%.

Henry Ford was the antithesis of an empowering leader. He always seemed to undermine his leaders and look over the shoulders of his people. Perhaps Ford's most peculiar dealings were with his executives, especially his son Edsel. The younger Ford had worked at the company since he was a boy. As Henry got more eccentric, Edsel worked harder to keep the company going. In fact, if it was not for Edsel, the Ford Motor Company probably would have gone out of business in the 1930's. Henry eventually gave Edsel the presidency of the company and publicly said that Ford Motor Company's future looked bright with his leadership. Yet, at the same time, he undermined him and backed other leaders within the organization. Any time a promising leader rose up in the company, Henry tore him down. As a result, the company kept losing its most promising executives. The few who stayed did so because of Edsel. They figured that some day old Henry would die, and Edsel would finally take over and set things right, but that is not what happened. In 1943, Edsel died at age 49.

Edsel's oldest son, the 26 year old Henry Ford II, took over leadership of the company. Young Henry was taking over a company that had not made a profit in 15 years. The young president knew he was in over his head, so he began looking for leaders.

Leaders he found . . . or they found him, either way, he got good ones. Men like Colonel Charles "Tex" Thornton and Ernie Breech — and the company began to turn the corner. By 1949 the Ford Motor Company was back on a roll again. In that year, the company sold over a million Fords, Mercurys, and Lincolns.

If Henry Ford II had lived by the *Law of Empowerment*, the Ford Motor Company might have grown enough to eventually overtake General Motors and become the number one car company again. Only secure leaders are able to give power to others.

Henry felt threatened. The success that Thornton, Breech and Lewis Crusoe had brought into the company, made Henry worry about his own place at Ford. His position was not based on influence but on his name and his family's control of company stock. So Henry began putting one top executive against another. This became a pattern of leadership of Ford II. Any time an executive gained power and influence, Henry would undercut the person's authority by either moving him into a position with less clout, supporting the executive's subordinates, or publicly humiliating him. This continued all the days Henry II was at Ford.

## I. Assessment

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

- A. Is it easy to "share" your power and authority with others?
- B. When you delegate a major responsibility to someone, do you attempt to pull it back and stay involved?
- C. Are you training your key people?
- D. Do you trust your key people?
- E. Have you cultivated an environment that champions risk, allows mistakes, and has an innovative spirit?
- F. Do you consider yourself basically "secure" or "insecure" as a leader? How would those closest to you answer this question?
- G. Do your key people express gratitude to you for the opportunities that you have made available for them?

## II. Application

Both Henry Fords failed to live by the *Law of Empowerment*. Rather than finding leaders, building them up, giving them resources, authority, and responsibility, and then turning them loose to achieve, they alternately encouraged and undermined their best people because of their own insecurity.

My desire is to equip you in the art of empowering others. The following outline will help you greatly.

The 5 components of empowerment:

A. You must trust your people with \_\_\_\_\_.

Moving forward often begins with letting go. When your church, business, or private endeavor was smaller, you could personally lead and control the whole enterprise. If you want to grow, you must let go. That is the essence of empowerment.

The first step is trusting qualified others with responsibility. In my book I refer to Dan Reiland, who is my Vice President of Leadership and Church Development at INJOY. In the chapter on empowerment I included a note he wrote me about empowering him. I had mentored him for over 6 years, and yet the role of Executive pastor of a large church is a formidable responsibility. Up to that point I had always personally led all the churches and other endeavors under my charge. I knew however, if I wanted to grow I must let go! I gave the reins to Dan, and I am glad I did!

1. Empowering begins at a \_\_\_\_\_ level.

It is about trust, and by now you can see by the other Irrefutable Laws of Leadership that trust is a foundational element of effective leadership. There are many dimensions of trust, such as the people trusting you, and you trusting your key staff.

**★ The reason I say empowering begins at a heart level, is because trust is an inner issue. Releasing that which is important and or precious to you is not easy, if not impossible, without trust.**

This concept works at all levels, from a convenience store owner trusting a clerk at the cash register while she is away, or the CEO of a large corporation trusting his/her Senior Vice President with millions of dollars. Trust is essential.

2. Do your best to get the right \_\_\_\_\_ in the right \_\_\_\_\_.

The focus here is not a seminar on hiring, which is a book in itself, but to emphasize the importance of placing the right people in the right roles.

You may have the right people, but in the wrong roles! Of course, you may need to make some changes. Either way, you can not afford to have your people in the wrong positions. **Help your people stretch out of their comfort zone, but not their gift zone.**

3. You need to be willing to let them make \_\_\_\_\_.

Have you made any mistakes? I have. Your key people must be given permission to make mistakes, even encouraged. People who make no mistakes are not pushing and stretching enough. The key is to establish an environment that forgives mistakes . . . once. The same mistake twice is not acceptable.

4. You need to be willing to let them \_\_\_\_\_.

Amazingly, this is a common problem. You would think that the success of key personnel is reason to celebrate! As we saw with both Henry Fords, leaders who are insecure will torpedo the success of their key staff. If you are not willing to let them succeed, then do not put them there in the first place. To put it another way, if you are not willing to let them succeed, then you are setting them up for failure. There is no middle ground.

- B. You must train them for \_\_\_\_\_.

One of the primary marks of a great organization is their commitment to professional training. When you and your key leaders stop growing, so does your organization.

1. Identify the \_\_\_\_\_ that they need.

An effective training process begins by identifying the specific areas in need of training. "Generic" training is helpful, but has dramatically less impact and bottom line results. It is like the difference between taking tennis lessons with 19 people in the class and taking private lessons. The former is helpful, but the latter can truly improve your game.

As individually as reasonable, depending upon the size of your organization, identify the training needs and set out to fulfill them. If your organization is large, consider a professional consulting firm in the area of need and design custom training just for your people.

2. Commit \_\_\_\_\_ to the training process.

No short cuts! Do not attempt to find the "add water and stir" method, or hand out one book and think your people are trained. It is a never ending process.

3. Support the training \_\_\_\_\_.

The best, most innovative, and fastest growing organizations have a generous budget for training their key personnel, and the entire organization.

4. Insist on \_\_\_\_\_.

This is where the rubber meets the road. You need to resist a merely academic experience. Whether you send your team to a seminar, or bring in a consultant, or do the training yourself — the key is application. The very reason I am motivated to provide this audio training resource for you is that in order to gain the maximum value from the 21 laws, you need apply them to your life.

Jesus' method:

**I**nstruction  
**D**emonstration  
**E**xposure  
**A**ccountability

You may choose a written report, or verbal discussion, or even include new goals in a performance plan. Whatever method you choose, insist on application of new insights and information to their areas of responsibility.

C. You must unleash them with \_\_\_\_\_.

The vice-presidents of the United States have been the brunt of many jokes over the course of the years. This is largely true because they have so little real authority, and therefore, end up doing things about the level of a elementary school street crossing guard. The truth is, no matter how talented the Vice President may be, without authority he can accomplish little.

1. You must first settle any of your \_\_\_\_\_ about "sharing" your authority or power.

This is the point I make in the book when I refer to the non-empowering leader as being insecure. Henry Ford II was insecure in his own leadership, so he was unable to truly release authority to his key executives. He had a "short rope" attached to each one so he could pull them back in whenever he deemed necessary, or more bluntly, whenever he felt insecure.

Let me be candid with you. If you struggle with insecurity, you will never grow your organization to its maximum potential. I do not want to be flippant, or suggest that it is easy. You must pursue any avenue to help you move beyond insecurities that stifle your growth or the growth of your organization.

When you keep your authority to yourself, your authority decreases. When you share your authority with others, it increases.

2. The authority you grant must always \_\_\_\_\_ the responsibility you expect.

This is one of the more clear cut points. When you give someone a responsibility, you must give them the authority needed to fulfill the responsibility. If you must error, since this is not an exact science, error generously. That communicates trust. You are better operating on the principle of trust until its violated, rather than miserly doling it out in bite- sized pieces.

3. Create an environment of \_\_\_\_\_ not caution.

Risk, boldness, and continuous cutting edge innovation are marks of an organization that moves forward, while the cautious ones are left behind. The first step to introduce this attitude into your organization, is for you to lead the way and give permission for others to do the same.

- D. You must monitor your people through \_\_\_\_\_.

The more training and communicating you do, the less accountability is needed.

1. Accountability is not \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.

Watching over their shoulder in a "magnifying glass" style of follow-up is not healthy or helpful accountability.

2. Accountability is planned \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.

Effective accountability is just enough follow-up, according to each person's level of maturity and experience, to make sure the goal is accomplished in a timely and maximized way. The best system is to empower each individual to keep *you* informed, rather than you "chasing" them. This allows you to make the contact that you initiate to be largely positive and encouraging.

- E. You must care about them and believe in them for \_\_\_\_\_.

★ ***It is wonderful when the people believe in the leader. It is even more wonderful when the leader believes in the people.*** I have found over the years that no matter how much experience someone has, how accomplished they become, or how much money they make, they need someone to care about and believe in them.

This comes naturally for me. For many years now I have practiced figuratively putting "10's"

on peoples foreheads, to remind me of their potential. I have also found that it is difficult to put a 10 on them if I do not care about them as a person. The following outline will help you in this process.

1. Caring means looking out for their best interest.
2. Caring about them means being honest even when it hurts.
3. Believing in them is a statement of faith from your heart about their personhood and their potential.
4. Believing in them is valuing them as an important human being.
5. Believing in them is a deposit of your personal faith and confidence into their lives, in such a way that it increases their faith and confidence in themselves.

### III. Action Assignment

**★ Read Stephen Covey's book, *Principle Centered Leadership*. Study the section that discusses the difference between the principle of abundance and the principle of scarcity. How does this relate and apply to your leadership authority and empowering your people? This will be an insightful learning discovery for you!**