

Living the 21 Laws of Leadership

The Law of Respect People Naturally Follow Leaders Stronger than Themselves

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

Application Guide

The stirring story of Harriet Tubman merits review. She strongly illustrates the *Law of Respect*. In chapter seven I tell her story in brief, and review it here to paint a vivid picture in your mind of a leader who was greatly respected.

She was not an impressive looking woman. She could not read or write. Her clothes were well worn but neat, and when she smiled, people could see that her top two front teeth were missing.

She lived alone after abandoning her husband at age 29. Her employment was intermittent. Most of the time she took domestic jobs in small hotels: scrubbing floors, making up rooms, and cooking. Just about every spring and fall she would disappear from her place of employment, come back broke, and work again to scrape together what little money she could. When she was present on the job, she worked hard and seemed physically tough, but was known to have fits where she would suddenly fall asleep — some coming even in the middle of a conversation. She attributed her affliction to a blow to the head she had taken as a teenager. When she was 13, she was in a store, and a white overseer demanded her assistance so that he could beat an escaping slave. When she refused and blocked the overseer's way, the man threw a two-pound weight that hit Tubman in the head. She nearly died, and her recovery took months.

Tubman started as a slave herself. She was born in 1820, and grew up in the farmland of Maryland. At age 24, she married John Tubman, a free black man. When she talked to him about escaping to freedom in the North, he would not hear of it. He said that if she tried to leave, he would turn her in. So when she resolved to take her chances and go north in 1849, she did so alone, without a word to him.

Tubman made her way to Philadelphia, via the Underground Railroad, a secret network of free blacks, white abolitionists, and Quakers who helped escaping slaves who were on the run. Though free herself, she vowed to return to Maryland and bring her family out. In 1850, she made her first return trip as an Underground Railroad "conductor" — someone who retrieved and guided out slaves with the assistance of sympathizers along the way.

Each summer and winter, Tubman worked as a domestic, scraping together the funds needed to make return trips to the South. Every spring and fall, she risked her life by going south and returning with more people. She was fearless. Her leadership was unshakeable. It was extremely dangerous work, and when people in her charge wavered, she was strong as steel. Tubman knew escaped slaves who returned would be beaten and tortured until they gave information about those who had helped them escape. She never allowed any people she was guiding to give up.

Between 1850 and 1860, Harriet Tubman guided out more than 300 people, including many of her own family members. She made 19 trips in all and was very proud of the fact that she never once lost a single person under her care. "I never ran my train off the track," she once said, "and I never lost a passenger." Southern whites put a \$12,000 price on her head — then a fortune.

Southern blacks simply called her Moses. By the start of the Civil War, she had brought more people out of slavery than any other American in history.

People naturally follow leaders stronger than themselves. People follow leaders they respect. The focus of this chapter is to help you increase the level of respect people have for you.

I. Assessment

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

- A. What accomplishments are you known for?
- B. What are your top personal convictions from which you will not waver?
- C. What is different in your life today, from one year ago, that would cause people to respect you more?
- D. Are you prone to confront when necessary or back down, and "let it go?"
- E. Do you naturally treat others with respect?
- F. Do you feel as though you are treated with respect, or do you feel a little more like Rodney Dangerfield? (Just can't get no respect!) Why?
- G. Are you respected by your family as much as you are your professional colleagues? *The definition of success is those closest to me, love and respect me the most.*

II. Application

★ It is vital to understand at the onset that increasing the level of respect others have for you is not about something they do, or that is done to them. It is all about you. It is about what happens inside you as a leader, which in turn affects what you do as a leader, that increases the respect people have for you.

With respect, you have potential to influence many, without respect, you influence few or none.

- A. Maintain a willingness to _____ when necessary.

Confrontation is a sign of strength. The goal is not be a bully, but one who is willing to con-

front when necessary. It may be a disciplinary issue, or it could be mentoring one of your sharpest people who is not living up to their potential, or perhaps you are in a "heated discussion" and faced with backing down from your convictions or standing up to your boss. ***Good leaders do not enjoy confrontation, but they are good at it, and never, never hesitate to act on it.***

Harriet Tubman was a strong confronter. She never allowed people she was guiding to give up because she knew they would be tortured to get information. She said: "Dead folks tell no tales." She once said to a faint-hearted slave as she held a loaded pistol to his head — "You go on or die!"

I trust you will never hold a gun to anyone's head!, but the willingness to confront is a must. The following outline will serve you well in the art of confrontation.

1. Examine yourself first, what have you contributed to the situation?
2. Do not confront in anger.
3. Stay focused on the issue at hand, do not get personal.
4. Communicate the problem - be direct and clear.
5. Avoid sarcasm, attacking and use of the words "always" and "never."
6. Show that you understand their position.
7. Seek a solution that is a win-win scenario.
8. Put the issue in the past, do not hold any grudges.
9. Reflect upon what you learned through the process.

B. Develop a clear conviction that results into a purposeful _____.

It must be evident in your life that you know:

- Who you are.
- Where you are going.
- How you will get there.
- Why* you are going.
- And that you will not compromise your standards or beliefs.

Not everyone will agree with you, but they will respect your strength and depth of conviction. *Beliefs are what you hold and convictions are what holds you.*

Harriet Tubman's conviction was birthed in her heart and carried out in her very foot steps every day of her life — her profound conviction of freedom for all humankind. No one could sway her from her conviction. This earned amazing respect. Contrast this to a wishy-washy politician, or an educator that cares only about tenure, or a businessman who is near

retirement, or a pastor who prefers being liked over respected and does not want to rock the boat. The message is clear, the passion of leadership is conviction. This is the cornerstone of the *Law of Respect*.

C. Make sure you are willing to stand _____.

I can remember standing alone on the floor of major meetings of my denomination. I am loyal to my religious heritage and respect many of my colleagues, but on occasion I feel constrained to stand alone, against the grain, alone if need be, to speak to an issue that calls for change.

It is interesting how support rises when one will stand. This is not my motive, to make a theatrical stand to garner support, I wish only to speak to the issue. In every case, my willingness to stand alone brings out the support and sometimes even courage of others.

This is one of the ways the *Law of Respect* works, but the leader must always go first. If you are not willing to stand alone, others will never stand with you when it counts.

D. Have the courage to say _____.

This is one of the greatest signs of personal security and positive mental health. I say mental health, because if you do not learn how to say "no," you will eventually end up an emotional basket-case. Being a team player is important, and seeing the big picture is equally important, but on occasion, you must say "no" to the good things in order to say "yes" to the best things.

Learning to say no is not just about courage, but also learning how to prioritize your life and become much more productive, thereby increasing respect even further. Do not get caught in the "people pleasing" trap, it is a never ending chase that will only exhaust you and you will lose respect in the process.

E. _____ for _____.

I purposefully chose not to say "learn to think for yourself" because I believe most people know how, it is more a matter of doing it than learning it. Thinking is work, and very time consuming. Let's face it, sometimes even the best of us get a lazy streak going. Leaders who are "movers and shakers" do not fall into this zone very often and certainly not for very long, but others must beware. It is easy, even for very intelligent people, to let others think for them — why not? . . . They get the job done and you do not have to strain your grey matter! True!, but you lose respect. People follow the thinkers who think for themselves!

F. Make a significant_____.

Work hard, work smart, and most importantly work in such a way that you produce results that make a difference. Harriet Tubman delivered over 300 people to their freedom, and made an even bigger statement in history about the inhumane practice of slavery. Lincoln gets the well deserved credit for the Emancipation Proclamation, but she personally took the hands and hearts of over 300 human beings and walked them, one step at a time into their freedom. That is a significant contribution. What will yours be? When your time on this earth is up, what will you be remembered for? I promise you it will not be long hours in the office, or all the meetings you attended, or your fancy titles. You will be remembered by the difference you made in people's lives.

The following is an often shared powerful quote, but it bears value to share it again here.

In his book *Who Switched the Price Tags?*, Anthony Campolo related the words of the pastor of a black Baptist church, speaking to a group of college students in his congregation.

"Children," he said, "you are going to die!" . . . One of these days, they are going to take you out to the cemetery, drop you in a hole, throw some dirt on your face, and go back to the church and eat potato salad. "When you were born," he said, "you alone were crying and everybody else was happy. The important questions I want you to ask are these: When you die are you alone going to be happy, leaving everybody else crying? The answer depends on whether you live to get titles or you live to get testimonies. When they lay you in the grave, are people going to stand around reciting the fancy titles you earned, or are they going to stand around giving testimonies of the good things you did for them? . . . Will you leave behind just a newspaper column telling people how important you were, or will you leave crying people who give testimonies of how they have lost the best friend they have ever had?"

G. Be _____ in yourself.

People will not respect, — let alone, follow — someone who is insecure. Insecurity is one the greatest factors in repelling people from you, rather than inspiring them to follow you. Do not misunderstand, everyone has insecurities, but that is different from *being* insecure. The former is simply part of being an imperfect human being, the later is being overwhelmed by a large number of insecurities, some of which are real and some have no reason for their existence.

I am not a therapist, so I am not qualified to comment on the issue of how to deal with deep personal issues, but I can comment on the basics of a healthy self-esteem. The first is to see yourself as God sees you, nothing more and nothing less. You are a loved creation,

designed intentionally with a purpose in mind. You have infinite and eternal value — as you acknowledge God's grace in your life. Second, accept yourself as you are. Literally learn to like yourself, the real you, just as you are. This is not to say that you should not learn, grow and improve, but I am referring to the basic you. Third, do not worry so much about what others think. Remember, when you are up half the night stewing about it all, they are fast asleep, probably snoring and definitely not giving it one moments thought.

H. Develop your _____ in your chosen field.

Somewhere in the equation of being respected, you must be good at what you do! The only exception to this is if you are the only one on the planet doing it, then you can get away with a little sloppiness!, but that is not a likely scenario.

There is no way to get around the investment of much time and the sacrifice of some sleep and some play. Michael Jordan did not get to be the best basketball player in the world without hundreds of hours of diligent practice. . . and he still practices! Luciano Pavoratti did not become one of the greatest tenors in the world by occasionally singing in the shower. Herb Kelleher did not launch Southwest Airlines by sitting around hoping someday something good would happen to him.

5% of success is timing, 5% is opportunity, 5% is talent, 80% is thousands of hours of perspiration, devotion, and perseverance and 5% is dumb luck!!

Get the training you need. Expose yourself to people who are better than you and learn from them. Be willing to pay for learning and personal growth. Dig in and study. Read books and journals, listen to tapes and file notes in a way you can find what you wrote.

Do not settle for settling, you were designed to excel.

I. Treat others with _____.

Like trust, you must give respect if you want to receive it. Cynicism or disdain for those less talented than you, does not suit a leader's profile, and reduces your respectability rapidly.

J. Maintain a steadfast commitment to a solid _____.

This was covered in depth in the application guide on the *Law of Solid Ground* (trust). In brief review, character is foundational to your skills — your competencies. You can be the best there is in a certain field, but if your character has significant flaws that are unattended to, the respect others have for you will eventually decrease to an all time low.

Be a person of integrity. Do what you say you will do, and do the right thing.

III. Action Assignment

Write down the name of a leader or two that you greatly respect. They should exhibit character and competency.

Now list out the qualities and characteristics that cause you to respect them.

Arrange for a meeting, perhaps a lunch and briefly interview them (individually) to learn what makes them tick. (Prepare 7 - 10 questions in advance of meeting.) *Learn about respect — and earn it!*