



Leadership Habits – Learning, Bending, NOT Breaking



Leadership entails helping others change – to consider new methods, effectively use different tools, communicate in preferred ways, and adopt higher-level skills.

However, change – especially when people have little control over what they're to do differently – always includes giving up accustomed methods, such as habits. These are default auto-pilot programs and reflexes (both mental and physical), ingrained thought patterns that are predictable and "comfortable."

On the upside, habits can save time and energy, providing reliable methods for repeating tasks. On the downside, they're adhesions that cement people to old, sometimes outmoded ways and can thereby block making strategy and action improvements. Further, grooved patterns don't work well where situations look familiar but are functionally different. Best leaders know that, first, change is perpetual. And, second, that improvement begins within. So if you want to better catalyst, encouraging others to change their habits, consider practicing shrugging off old habits yourself.

*The best leaders
make it their habit
to help others
bend, learn – and
not break.*

Here are some keys for leaders to help workers replace older ways with newer ones:

- Workers have to see personal value – rather than just to the company – for replacing old habits, trying something new.
- They accept (beyond what others just tell them) that newer and better ways to handle tasks are continually being discovering. Open up the topic of habits – why all of us have them, that they're not bad but may be dated and not as formerly useful. That technology has changed, so their techniques can as well. Perhaps appeal to their interest in keeping up to date.
- They believe you are personally concerned about them and their safety, more than about making you look good or saving the company money.





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- That safety is truly more of a real priority than it was way-back-when – they are provided training and time to try on and work out new methods for themselves. Show them they can personally make small adjustments (a little effort for big results). The less you ask/expect/require others to do, the more likely they'll do it.
- Leaders are realistic. Expect some inconsistency during the change process; it's rare when habit reformation instantly occurs. In fact, people may take "five steps forward and four steps back. "Lasting change typically stems from a continuous campaign. Encourage them to practice just a few times a day to start. Then build from 2 to 3-4 times a day, eventually incorporating new actions into their auto-pilot mode.
- Lead discussions and show examples of others who have successfully changed personal habits in their lives. Almost everyone has either changed longstanding habits or knows someone else who has.
- Excitement helps – they see a quick improvement (they're successful trying out new methods). There's nothing more reinforcing than feeling even moderate accomplishment. For example, at the end of one training, a peer instructor asked his group, "How many of you have done something today that you never thought you'd be able to do?" Almost all hands rose. He followed up, "Think what else you might be able to do that you never thought you could!"
- Chart the changes you seek and give workers feedback on their ability to change. Help them see the fruits of their accomplishment. This is critical.
- Provide consistent attention to the changes you want – in training, follow-up, on-the-job coaching, and reinforcing conversations and meetings. Replacing old habits with better routines is not only possible, it's critical for improving outlook and actions.



*"Affirmation
without discipline
is the beginning of
delusion."
~Jim Rohn*

