

Building Leadership Clarity

10 Strategies for Accessing Your Full Leadership Capacity

By David A. O'Brien



“The starting point of all achievement is desire.”

This powerful reminder from legendary human development author Napoleon Hill represents a common theme among many of the requests I receive from leaders to help them more fully access their leadership capacity. Another theme among these requests is that our ability to demonstrate leadership excellence goes well beyond the boundaries of the workplace. The truth is that without an ardent desire to improve as leaders, none of us can expect to recognize our full leadership capacity in every role we play. It is within this context that the following 10 Strategies for Accessing Your Full Leadership Capacity are presented.

- 1. Find your True North by considering your values, intentions, and purpose.** Much has been written about the concept of True North and despite a wide range of viewpoints, *self-awareness* is central among leadership thinkers. True North in navigating terms is the most direct line to the North Pole axis which is used to calibrate and set a compass. In leadership terms, it is the most direct path to a fully integrated life where core values consistently guide actions and behavior.
- 2. Define who you want to be as a leader and what others expect of you as a leader.** A natural outcome of self-awareness is the clarity and resulting purpose that allows us to define with great confidence, who we are and what we stand for both as leaders and as human beings. It also helps us to better understand and adapt to what is expected of us by our many stakeholders.
- 3. Examine and challenge your negative self-talk.** Every human being at one time or another has struggled with self-doubt and the resulting negative self-talk that erodes clarity and confidence. This is part of the human experience, and it may not be a bad thing as long as we take the time to examine, challenge and learn from the experience.
- 4. Look for more “role model” opportunities each day.** We are all presented with countless opportunities to be positive role models both in and out of work. However, the key question is *what type of behavior are we role modeling?* Is it really who we are? Is it congruent with our core values and who we want to be as a leader?
- 5. Make an effort to shut-off the “auto pilot” & work hard at being fully present.** To be sure, everyone is doing more with less these days and multi-tasking has become an expected skill. Often, these factors result in a level of distraction best described as “auto pilot” where we completely lose touch with the present. Beyond being an impediment to doing our best work, the auto-pilot mode reduces our full capacity to lead.

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6. Count your blessing more often - develop a deeper sense of gratitude. I like to call this a WMIS AM & FM discovery. The WMIS translates into “What’s My Internal Screen” which is a frame of reference as I awake each day. The AM represents the Appreciation Mode, and the FM represents the Fear Mode. This framework allows us to examine our capacity to develop a deeper sense of gratitude while also helping to keep the negative self-talk in-check.

7. Keep a journal of your leadership journey. Contrary to some viewpoints, journaling does not have to follow a structured process or be filled with high content expectations. Some days my journal may have only one word written in it but it’s a word that makes me think, and thinking is a key goal and benefit of the journaling process.

8. Give yourself permission to develop your own leadership formula for work and life. Far too many leaders invest far too much time in trying to be someone else as a leader. While there is value in emulating successful leaders, the truth is that a great deal of leadership success is tied to one’s authenticity.

9. Calibrate your compass every morning through 10 minutes of deliberate self-reflection. Not surprisingly, being able to stay on your True North course takes more than values clarity. It takes practice and daily calibrating of your moral compass. Some call it prayer, others meditation and still others call it self-reflection. Whatever you call it, taking 10 minutes every morning to refocus and recalibrate may be the most important 10 minutes of your day.

10. Develop your emotional intelligence. Very few leaders fail for lack of IQ but many fail for lack of EQ. Emotional intelligence, often referred to as EQ or EI represents one of the best development opportunities available to leaders today. Unlike IQ which typically doesn’t change after adolescence, EQ is a learned intelligence that over time and through learning and practice can continue to increase well beyond age 60.

From discovering our True North to developing our emotional intelligence, desire may very well be the all important first step in being able to access our full leadership capacity.

About David A. O’Brien:

David is President of CT based WorkChoice Solutions, a trusted provider of leadership and team effectiveness training, coaching, and consulting services that was founded in 2000. His first book, *The Navigator’s Handbook, 101 Leadership Lessons for Work & Life* is [available on-line](#) and in bookstores nationwide. His second book, *The Navigator’s Compass, 101 Steps Toward Leadership Excellence* was released in 2016 and is also available wherever books are sold. Additionally, his articles have appeared in a variety of local, regional, and national publications. He works with a wide range of corporate, nonprofit, and public sector clients to help bring about sustainable improvements in organizational effectiveness. To learn more, [please visit WorkChoice Solutions](#).