

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership

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Overview

The author shares patterns he's observed in his career of communication, coaching, and leadership. These "laws" are applicable regardless of where a leader is on his/her journey and are vocation-agnostic.

1. **The Law of the Lid:** The higher the ability to lead, the higher the lid.
2. **The Law of Influence:** The true measure of leadership is influence; nothing more, nothing less.
3. **The Law of Process:** Leadership develops daily, not in a day.
4. **The Law of Navigation:** Anyone can steer the ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course.
5. **The Law of Addition:** Leaders add value by serving others.
6. **The Law of Solid Ground:** Trust is the solid foundation of leadership; it's the glue that holds the system together.
7. **The Law of Respect:** People naturally follow leaders stronger than themselves.
8. **The Law of Intuition:** Leaders evaluate everything with a leadership bias.
9. **The Law of Magnetism:** Who you are is what you attract.
10. **The Law of Connection:** Leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand.
11. **The Law of the Inner Circle:** A leader's potential is determined by those closest to him.
12. **The Law of Empowerment:** Only secure leaders give power to others.
13. **The Law of the Picture:** People do what people see.
14. **The Law of Buy-in:** People buy into the leader, then the vision.
15. **The Law of Victory:** Leaders find a way for the team to win.
16. **The Law of the Big Mo:** Momentum is the leader's best friend.
17. **The Law of Priorities:** Leaders understand that activity is not necessarily accomplishment.
18. **The Law of Sacrifice:** A leader must give up to go up.
19. **The Law of Timing:** When to lead is just as important as what to do and where to go.
20. **The Law of Explosive Growth:** To add growth, lead followers to multiple lead leaders.
21. **The Law of Legacy:** A leader's lasting value is measured by succession.

Law #1: The Law of the Lid

- The higher the ability to lead, the higher the lid.
- Ex: Dick and Maurice McDonald were good single-restaurant owners. Their thinking clamped the lid down on what they could become. Ray Kroc had a vision for the restaurant's potential, so he founded McDonald's Foundation Inc.
- The higher you want to climb, the more you need leadership.
- When Apple Computer started, Wozniak's lid was lower than Jobs'

Law #2: The Law of Influence

- The true measure of leadership is influence; nothing more, nothing less.
- What do leaders look like? How do you measure their effectiveness? Mother Theresa is an example.
- Titles don't have much value when it comes to leading; leadership comes from influence, and that can only be earned.
- Myths:
 - *Leading and managing are the same*; leading = creating positive change, managers = maintaining direction
 - *All entrepreneurs are leaders*; they see needs, but they may not be good with people
 - *Knowledge is power*; any university has professors that have great knowledge, but they can't lead
 - *Pioneers are leaders*; being the first isn't the same as leading, you need people coming behind you too
- Why is it that some people can do this?
 - Character (who they are)
 - Relationships (who they know)
 - Knowledge (what they know); this is necessary but insufficient
 - Intuition (what they feel); leaders recognize intangibles such as energy, morale, timing, momentum
 - Experience (where they've been)
 - Past successes (what they've done)
 - Ability (what they can do)
- "He who thinks he leads but has no followers is only taking a walk."

Law #3: The Law of Process

- Leadership develops daily, not in a day.
- Ex: Anne Sheiber (retired spinster) willed \$22M to Yeshiva University; she saved up 1 day at a time in stocks. If you hope to make a fortune in a day, you won't be successful. What matters is what you do day-by-day over the long haul.
- Leaders need the capacity to develop and improve skills over time
- Read books, go to conferences, etc.
- Look for mentors in leadership
- Work on it everyday

Law #4: The Law of Navigation

- Anyone can steer the ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course.
- Ex: two explorers trying to get to Antarctica; Scott could not navigate his team
- Followers need leaders to effectively navigate for them; they have the vision for where they're going and what it will take to get there, and recognize obstacles long before they appear
- Take time to learn from your successes and your mistakes
- Examine the conditions before making commitments
- They listen to what others have to say because they don't have all the answers
- You need to believe you can make the journey

Law #5: The Law of Addition

- Leaders add value by serving others.
- Jim Senegal (CEO of Costco) believes his employees should be well-treated (low employee turnover), and he cares about his workers (he wears a name tag, visits each store once a year); he also takes a very low salary. It's not altruistic, it's good business.
- The bottom line in leadership is how well we advance others. All relationships either add to or subtract from people's lives.
- Are you making things better for the people that follow you? (Need a resounding "Yes" with examples.)
- Leaders add value intentionally and unselfishly.
- Daryl Hartly-Leonard (Hyatt Hotels): "When a person moves into a position of authority, he/she gives up the right to abuse people."
- What do you have to give others? Insight/perspective, teach skills, opportunities, etc.
- Listen, learn, and then lead. What is valuable to them? Then lead based on what's valuable.

Law #6: The Law of Solid Ground

- Trust is the solid foundation of leadership; it's the glue that holds the system together.
- It's like change in a leader's pocket; good decisions go in your pocket, losing trust means you pay it out.
- Exemplify confidence, connection, and character to build trust.
- Character communicates...
 - *Consistency*; people need to know what to expect from you
 - *Potential*; honest, disciplined, hard-working; people with weak character are not trustworthy
 - *Respect*; make sound decisions, admit mistakes, put followers/org ahead of personal agendas

Law #7: The Law of Respect

- People naturally follow leaders stronger than themselves.
- Ways to gain respect
 - Natural leadership ability (don't rely on talent alone)
 - Respect for others (as opposed to violence or intimidation)
 - Courage
 - Success
 - Loyalty (especially in an environment of high-turnover)

Law #8: The Law of Intuition

- Leaders evaluate everything with a leadership bias.
- Intuition is the ability to read what's going on; "leaders are readers" of their situation
- Leaders are readers of...
 - *Trends*; followers think about tasks at hand
 - *Their resources*; focused on using others as levers instead of their own resources
 - *People* (allies, enemies)
 - *Themselves*; they can hinder work just as much as effectively accomplish it
- Every situation is different; without intuition leaders get blindsided

Law #9: The Law of Magnetism

- Who you are is what you attract.
- Do you know who you're looking for and trying to hire? What qualities do you want them to possess?
- You draw to you the people that possess qualities similar to yourself (birds of a feather flock together)
 - Generation/age (think young tech companies hiring people the same age)
 - Attitude (like attracts like)
 - Background (education level, race, class)
 - Values (JFK, Hitler)
 - Energy (need an impedance match)
 - Giftedness
- You are not stuck; increase your leadership skill to attract better people; examine your own character
- Look for people different than you to augment your strengths
- Become the kind of person you desire to attract

Law #10: The Law of Connection

- Leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand.
- Examples from President George W. Bush
 - After 9/11, he got with the first responders and connected with them
 - After Katrina, he observed the damage from the helicopter; he had broken the Law of Connection
- You can't move people to action unless you first move them with emotion.
- People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.
- How do you connect?
 - *Be honest and sincere*; people are quick to spot phonies
 - *Know your audience*; learn names, histories, dreams, what they care about
 - *Live your message*; practice what you preach
 - *Go where they are*; be at their level, remove barriers, speak their language, adapt to others
 - *Focus on them, not yourself*
 - *Believe in them*; initiate with others
- Don't try to convince; connect
- (There's a great story in this chapter about the author working with a quarrelsome person at his church)

Law #11: The Law of the Inner Circle

- A leader's potential is determined by those closest to him
- Nobody leads alone
- Without a good team, leaders don't get to perform
- Nobody does everything well; no single leader does all of these 21 things well
- You must be intentional in your relationship building for your inner circle
 - Do they have high influence with others?
 - Do they bring a complementary strengths?
 - Do they add/multiply value to me and the organization?
 - Do they positively impact other inner circle members?

Law #12: The Law of Empowerment

- Only secure leaders give power to others.
- To lead others well, we need to be on their side to help them be successful
- King of the Hill (knock others down) vs. Follow the Leader (someone gains power, so other have less); these games are based on insecurities
- If you give some of your power away to others, there is still plenty to go around
- To keep others down you have to go down with them, then you have no way to level up
 - *Desire for job security* (I'll be indispensable!); the paradox is that if you can help them take over your job, you'll be more valuable to the company
 - *Resistance to change*; empowerment encourages people to grow and innovate; effective leaders are change agents
 - *Lack of self-worth*; these people are too busy worried about how they look, what others think, whether they are liked; they feel they have no power themselves, and you can't give what you don't have
- Lincoln used this with his military leaders, giving them the reins and then holding them accountable
- If you believe in others, they will believe in themselves
- Enlarging others makes you larger

Law #13: The Law of the Picture

- People do what people see.
- When the leaders show the right actions, followers will copy them and succeed
- Followers are always watching what you do
- It's easier to teach what's right rather than to do what's right

Law #14: The Law of Buy-in

- People buy into the leader, then the vision.
- Most people erroneously think that if the cause is good enough, people will buy in
- Have I given people reason to buy into me?
- The only reason followers will follow without buy-in is because of physical threat or the ability to withhold a paycheck
- When followers like the vision but not the leader, they find another leader. When they like the leader but not the vision, they try to change the vision.

Law #15: The Law of Victory

- Leaders find a way for the team to win.
- Losing is not an option (e.g., Churchill in WWII)
- Components for a team's dedication to victory
 - *Unity of vision*
 - *Diversity of skills*
 - *Leader dedicated to victory and raising players to their potential* (you can't win without good athletes, but you can lose with good athletes)
- Example: Southwest Airlines (Herb Kelleher) almost got put out of business when they got started

Law #16: The Law of the Big Mo

- Momentum is the leader's best friend.
- Pixar was born out of a division of LucasFilm that was sold to Steve Jobs; small shorts showed what could be done with the tech. Toy Story was its first film.
- When you have no momentum... simple tasks seem impossible, small problems look insurmountable, morale is low, future looks dark
- Momentum inspires people to perform at higher levels
- If you see mid-level leaders be successful in one place, then switch and become less successful, The Law of the Big Mo was at work (average people can perform above average in places with momentum)
- Momentum is easier to steer than to start
- Followers can catch it, managers can use it to their advantage, creating it requires a leader
- If the leader is waiting on inspiration, that's not good: "If you can't make some heat, get out of the kitchen."
- Model enthusiasm to attract like-minded people

Law #17: The Law of Priorities

- Leaders understand that activity is not necessarily accomplishment.
- Business != productivity; leaders need to look ahead and know what's important/next, see how things relate to the vision
- Pareto principle: if you focus your attention on the 20% most important activities, you'll have an 80% return on investment. Ex: If you have 10 employees, give your time to the best two. If you have 100 customers, focus on the 20 most important.
- (I don't personally agree with this because then there's no room for the bottom people to improve. I think my logic is backed up by companies abandoning stack-ranking for performance evals. My previous manager defended this stance by stating, "Why should I remove the bottom 20% when I don't hire below-average people?")
- Three Rs
 - *What is required of us?* What must I do that nobody can or should do for me?
 - *What gives the greatest return?* If something I'm doing can be done 80% as well by someone else, delegate it.
 - *What brings the greatest reward?*

Law #18: The Law of Sacrifice

- A leader must give up to go up.
- Leadership is not about the power or perks or glamour; it requires sacrifice. There are numerous recent examples of people that have abused their power for their own interests.
- Principles
 - *There is no success without sacrifice.* Ex: practice for athletes, parents give up time/resources to raise kids
 - *Leaders are often asked to give up more than others.* The more responsibility you accept, the fewer options you have.
 - *You must keep giving up to stay up.* You can't rest on your laurels; what got you here won't get you there.
 - *The higher level of leadership, the greater the sacrifice.*
- Every time you see success, you can be sure that someone made a sacrifice to make it happen.

Law #19: The Law of Timing

- When to lead is just as important as what to do and where to go.
- Ex: New Orleans in Sept 2005 (Katrina); the mayor of New Orleans waited too long to evacuate (bad timing); there were more delays on the federal and state levels
- Possible outcomes
 - Wrong outcome, wrong time = disaster
 - Right action, wrong time = resistance
 - Wrong action, right time = mistake
 - Right action, right time = success
- Good leadership requires
 - Understanding
 - Maturity
 - Confidence
 - Decisiveness
 - Experience (or gain wisdom from those that do have it)
 - Intuition
 - Preparation (create the right conditions)

Law #20: The Law of Explosive Growth

- To add growth, lead followers to multiply lead leaders.
- Develop leaders to grow; it takes a different mindset than growing followers
- Leaders that attract followers but never develop leaders get tired because they themselves must deal with everyone under their authority.
- It takes time, energy, and resources to develop leaders. To attract leaders, what you're doing has to be more compelling than what they're already doing. Your org needs to create an environment attractive to them, which is often not the cause
 - Orgs want stability, leaders want excitement
 - Orgs want structure, leaders want flexibility
 - Orgs want rules, leaders want to think outside the box
- It's even more difficult to keep good leaders. It takes a leader to raise up another leader.

Law #21: The Law of Legacy

- A leader's lasting value is measured by succession.
- Claire Booth Luce introduced the concept of one's life sentence: It's the one sentence people will say about you when your life is over. This can change over time.
- Your life sentence sets the direction for your life, and determines the legacy you will leave.
- Legacies live on through people, not things.
 - **Achievement** comes when people do big things by themselves
 - **Success** comes when they empower followers to do big things for them
 - **Significance** comes when they develop leaders to do great things with them
 - **Legacy** comes when they put leaders in a position to do great things without them.