

# **Ned's Rules of Engagement**

*These are not rules to live by; they are rules to enjoy living by.*

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## FOREWARD

The selection of books on leadership is virtually unlimited. Websites on the subject number in the tens of thousands and include theories on leadership and motivation, studies of the great leaders past and present as well as the latest trendy assertions regarding transformational or inspiration leadership. Authors are often referred to as gurus and have senior academic credentials and positions. What Ned Gravel offers is the nuts and bolts version of leadership in a manual that speaks to the most basic and essential aspects of the “privilege” to lead others.

When universities survey the needs of business to validate MBA programmes, they are constantly told by CEOs and other senior business executives, “We want graduates with more people skills.” While the standard of technical skills must be maintained, the lack of people skills severely limits the potential for MBAs to move into many important leadership positions. Ned’s rules focus on the people skills that are needed in leadership positions.

Ned brings his military and business experience to this work and his energy and passion for the subject come through. I am privileged to write a foreword for Ned’s Rules of Engagement because I have known Ned through his military and business careers and have seen his enthusiastic application of these rules as he has led his people to achieve more than they ever expected that they could. This manual is more than simply a collection of his thoughts. It contains Ned’s heartfelt beliefs on the serious responsibilities of leadership and is an effective guide to success.

The study of leadership has included work from philosophers, behavioural scientists, historians, military professionals and business professors, among others. Most of these studies have resulted in useful material that has held a few gems for any aspiring or practicing leader. What is so new and refreshing about Ned’s work is that it intuitively captures many of those ideas and takes them to the next level – the “so what” level. So what should I do? So how does it work? How do I know if I am succeeding as a leader?

Ned’s manual and course is a unique, hands-on approach to leadership development. He leads from the heart and inspires others to do the same.

Bill Yerex, BSc., MBA

# INTRODUCTION

My name is Ned. These are my rules but I cannot claim credit for any wisdom they impart. I catalogued the wisdom of many others into my own personal list for my own use. Relatively few people outside the military have occasion to experience situations where understanding these is critical to personal and group survival.

During 22 years of military service, I developed a passion for a topic that constantly affected my work. That passion was how leaders work - what they did, and more importantly, why they did it. I came to believe that; *"It is not important what we do, rather it is why."* In 1998, I developed these rules concerning people who are responsible for the work of others and how they should conduct themselves as leaders.

Thus were created "Ned's Rules of Engagement." The quirky title comes from two separate concepts.

- First, people who are responsible for the work of others need to live by a code of conduct in order to ensure success in their own work - being responsible for the work of others. This is an "engagement" to live by a code of the type given below - just like any other promise made to oneself or others.
- The second concept is that these rules are to focus leaders on the best set of responses they may use to react to developing circumstances. This connotation is taken straight from its military meaning and can be applied in much the same way. The military context is about a set of pre-determined reactions leaders are allowed take when faced with a pre-defined set of circumstances - or, "if circumstance **A** occurs then I am allowed to take action **B**."

Based on my approach that "what" is less important than "why," I have attempted to articulate the best reasons we can have for doing anything affecting our team are those most clearly understood by our team members. These reasons are also the most acceptable to them.

When we are responsible for the work of others, a well-understood set of principles can provide us with the best guidance for our actions. Leaders who are remembered for their significant positive contributions to their groups, are those that based their approaches on a set of well-understood guidelines.

These rules are not hard to follow and I have enjoyed the simplicity they provide when faced with complex circumstances that may include conflicting requirements. These rules are used to measure my own performance. Sometimes I use them to measure the performance of others occupying leadership positions.

There have been occasions when I have demanded adherence to one aspect or another of these rules from those for whom I worked. One of the joys of some career appointments were CEO's that could quote them to me.

These rules are not copyrighted. I feel that my greatest reward from having compiled them into one list is having more leaders and managers use them. More widespread application would make life so much easier for me in a number of ways. Working with people who understand their responsibilities to their own teams provides real clarity in overcoming challenges between organisations. This does not happen as often as I would like.

Personally, I have been lucky enough to work for some few who understand and apply them. There are many colleagues however, who work in organisations where leadership authority is exercised by those who will never understand them. There are pieces of the world I cannot fix.

I believe that application of these rules by leaders with and without real authority, can remove 95% of all job-related dissatisfaction experienced by fellow team members. A goal worthy of immense effort.

The best expression of what these rules can accomplish for an organisation is the following.

***Good leaders can motivate dispirited teams of people to achieve difficult objectives under impossible circumstances.***

And this is the most that any organisation can ask of its leaders - at any level.

## CHAPTER 1 – THREE TYPES OF RULES

The simple (original) list of rules I produced in 1998 is contained in Chapter 2. For this book, however, I have divided them into three categories. The segregation is artificial, but it allows a presentation in an order that works fairly well.

The divisions are:

- Who leaders are,
- What leaders do,
- How leaders work, and
- Other leadership considerations.

Each of these divisions is contained in one chapter. Each chapter contains the rules I think belong in that grouping.

Before proceeding, it is important to understand that successful leaders are not always charismatic, or forceful, or visionary although these traits can often help achieve success in selling ideas to a group of people.

Most successful leaders we meet will never be formally recognized for their success as leaders. From within their teams, they motivate and inspire others. Often, they are quiet and they seek nothing more than to do the right thing – for themselves, for their colleagues and their organisation. This is how they define their own personal success, and it is not based on personal achievement.

Throughout this book, you will encounter this aspect of leadership many times. Remember it. If you seek to be proficient at leadership solely for your own benefit – you will experience resistance from others.

Conversely, if you seek to enhance the success of your team, then this book can provide you some helpful tools.

## CHAPTER 2 – THE RULES

These are “Ned’s Rules of Engagement” as originally written and published. They are not all focussed on leadership, but their grouping into different categories is described in the chapters that follow.

1. *Selection and Maintenance of the Aim* is a concept that was invented to focus one's efforts for the conduct of war. It is also the first principle of success. When you are up to your backside in alligators, it may be difficult to remember that your original aim was to drain the swamp. Remember it – find the plug – drain the swamp. Most of the alligators will follow the water.
2. Leadership is defined as the *Art of Motivating People to achieve a common goal*. Management is defined as the *Science of Planning, Co-ordinating, Directing and Controlling resources to achieve an organisational goal*.
3. People are not resources...they are people.
4. Believe in your people first. They will look after the rest.
5. The first goal of a true leader is to write his/herself out of the job – become dispensable. All parts of the organisation should be able to function without the leader’s direct intervention. The true leader need not worry about loss of job – there are always enough new challenges to prevent this occurrence.
6. The first task of a leader is to name his/her successor. The people in the organisation need to know that there will be continuity of leadership. (See Rule 5 above)
7. People will only follow leaders who believe in something more important than oneself. No person willingly follows someone whose first interests are self-serving. They will tolerate such a person, but they will not follow them.
8. Leaders need to do three things well to succeed, and they need to do them in the following order:
  - Develop and articulate a vision for their team
  - Sell the vision and its associated aims to everyone on the team
  - Help the members of the team to achieve their aims.
9. Leaders will achieve success only when the success of the team is written in the eyeballs of the members of the team.
10. Organisational success can be defined as the moment that the last person in that organisation adopts their portion of the organisational vision, the main proponent of which is the organisation’s leader. In this way, the organisation can continue to

function as a coherent whole, without the necessity of constant leadership intervention. (See Rules 5 and 6 above)

11. Not making a decision is never an option. A decision to do nothing is still a decision.
12. Responsibility is the sum of the *authority* to do what is needed and the *accountability* for the results. No person can be *responsible* for something over which they have no authority, or for the results of which they cannot be held accountable. Authority is derived from the same entity that holds the individual accountable for the results – the organisation or person that *delegates* the responsibility.
13. The success of any meeting between two or more people rests solely with the person who wants the meeting. This is the person who has an *idea* or *vision* to transmit, especially if they wish other people to accept and act upon their ideas. Anyone having trouble accepting this truth should consider the person with the *idea* to be a vacuum cleaner salesman and then try to blame the housewife for his failure to sell her his idea – that she needs to buy his vacuum. Better still, consider the *idea* person to be an infantry battalion commander and then blame his soldiers for not *getting* the plan on how the unit is supposed to take their objective. If you try to allocate any of the responsibility for the successful outcome of these *meetings* to the housewife or the soldiers, consider whose responsibility it is to deliver *clarity*, establish *understanding*, and instil *acceptance* of the ideas being sold. Good Luck!
14. Effective communication consists of two parts listening and one part talking.
15. Companies do not make purchasing decisions. People do. People buy from others (including you) by going through the following purchasing sequence. (Remember Rule 013 above):
  - First, they buy you
  - Second, they buy your idea
  - Finally, they buy your product or service.
16. Anyone trying to make a presentation, teach others, or sell an idea to others will have their credibility based on the following criteria with the annotated weighting factor:

• Physical appearance and movement	(Visual)	55%
• Quality and tone of voice	(Vocal)	38%
• Content of the idea presented	(Content)	7%
17. A sale is defined as the happy exchange of product or service for dollars. Marketing is defined as doing something today to ensure sales tomorrow. The process of marketing is the eliciting of a specific, desired behaviour from a specific target market.

18. The Communications function is a subset of Marketing. Marketing is about convincing the people in a target market to do something. Communications is about how to get the message to them that best motivates this desired behaviour.
19. A Business Plan is the articulation of business rules to live by and how to live by them. The same is true of Strategic Plans, Quality Management Systems, Marketing Plans, Corporate Plans, and so on. These plans tell organisations (us) about which *things* we are going to do. The hard part is defining what those *things* are. (See Rules 1, 8 and 10 above)
20. All personal endeavour requires the use of four available resources. These are Energy, Knowledge, Time and Money. All of these are renewable resources, except Time.
21. In my professional life, they are colleagues. In my personal life, they are the most precious creatures in the universe. (This one may get me into trouble.)

## CHAPTER 3 – WHO ARE LEADERS?

Where do good leaders come from? How do people of average capability become such good leaders? I was once asked by a group of immediate subordinates, all of whom had ten times my leadership experience and a hundred times my competence, whether leaders were “made” or “born that way.”

To me, it did not seem right that good leaders were born with the talent to lead. That seemed to sound too much like a “privilege” of birth, when I felt it was really a skilset, learned and demonstrated. So my answer was that they probably learned their skill – that leaders were “made” and not “born that way.”

That day I passed my first leadership test in their eyes. They could now trust me not to be so arrogant as to endanger them unnecessarily when critical decisions were required.

Leaders are people who have:

- learned some simple truths about people, leadership and responsibility,
- learned some associated skills, and
- implemented these skills for a purpose that is more important than their own personal gain.

Most successful leaders are not known for being proficient practitioners of their profession or their trade. They accept their own imperfections and they rely on teamwork to fill in the missing pieces.

The following four rules for the most important considerations in leadership.

### ***Rule 1 – Leaders maintain focus***

*Selection and Maintenance of the Aim is a concept that was invented to focus one's efforts in the conduct of war. It is also the first principle of success. When you are up to your backside in alligators, it may be difficult to remember that your original aim was to drain the swamp. Remember it – find the plug – drain the swamp. Most of the alligators will follow the water.*

This is where good leadership really starts and it takes discipline. Your team members depend on your keeping focused on what is important. If you lose sight of the aim, they will be able to prop you up for only so long. And then it will become too much work for them.

A person who champions the group goal is a leader within that group. If you lead, you are the champion for whatever goal is agreed by the group. If the champion stops maintaining focus on the desired group outcomes, the group will not likely attain that goal, until and unless someone else steps into their shoes. See Rule 6.

In keeping focussed on the group goal, it is sometimes difficult to decide whether any particular activity is helping or not. To solve this dilemma, all activities should be measured by their contribution to the attainment of the group goal. If any particular endeavour is not fully supporting, assisting, or contributing to the group's attainment of the overall group goal, it should be abandoned. Stop doing it.

What are leaders expected to champion most often? Attainment of group goals.

If there are no group goals, it is time to find a leader who delivers on Rule 8.

## ***Rule 2 – Leaders understand motivation***

*Leadership is defined as the Art of Motivating People to achieve a common goal.  
Management is defined as the Science of Planning, Co-ordinating, Directing and Controlling resources to achieve an organisational goal.*

There is no simple formula for leadership. There is “give and take” and good leadership requires understanding of situations and people. The principal reason why this is so comes from the simple fact that a group of people consists primarily of people<sup>1</sup>. If this is a surprise, then the road ahead will be particularly difficult.

One of the ways we can differentiate between a science and an “art” is that a science can be quantified, structured, given rules, and learned as a process with inputs and outputs. Artistic disciplines require us to develop a feel for them as we learn them. The structured, rule-based approach will only take us so far. Beyond these lives only art.

Motivation is where real artistry occurs in leadership. Motivating individuals to participate in the attainment of a group goal is what sets good leaders apart from mediocre ones. Good leaders believe in the value of this effort. This is not true for the not-so-good leader. See Rules 13 and 14

Motivating a desired behaviour is also what salespeople do. This similarity adds credence to the common perception that good leaders are also charismatic and they can convince people to do things. This is true but it is not the only way for good leaders to work.

What separates a really good leader from a salesperson / politician is the reason for motivating the desired behaviour from other people. Salespersons and politicians motivate desired behaviours for personal gain such as sales and votes. The best leaders do it for reasons they believe are more important than themselves. See Rule 7.

The last pertinent aspect of this rule is that, try as we might, we can just never successfully motivate chairs, coffee cups, telephones or other inanimate objects to do

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<sup>1</sup> Occasionally, groups of people may include dogs or cats or budgies but these other life forms do not generally carry the same voting rights as the people, unless the activity is a dog sled race or the production of a cat food commercial.

anything. Motivation really only works on higher-order living organisms and only higher-order organisms can demonstrate behaviours modified through motivation.

Put simply, in order to motivate, there has to be people to motivate. No people = no leadership = no leader. A person who claims a leadership role without people is not a leader. Leaders need people more than people need them.

### ***Rule 3 – Leaders respect people***

*People are not resources...they are people.*

Telephone books are resources. Chairs are resources. Time is a resource. Money is a resource. Documents are resources. People are not. The most important leadership consideration caused by the difference between resources and people is how we treat (manage?) them.

In order to get the best from our equipment, our processes, our physical plant and other inanimate manifestations or resources, we try and manage them well. Well managed resources help us achieve organisational goals. We put them in the right place at the right time and that simple action contributes to our overall organisational success. This is part of successful management.

Any attempt to motivate any of these things (documents, equipment, plant, time etc) will fail. Resources cannot be motivated. Only people can be motivated.

Conversely, people do not need to be managed and will not give their best when we try and manage them. We have all heard someone say: “These people need to be managed.” What the speaker really means is: “These people need to be (persuaded / pushed / instructed / ordered) to ...” A person who uses these words<sup>2</sup> will never get the best from the members of their team.

In order to get the best from people, they need to be motivated, inspired, and led - not managed. In fact, they tend to manage themselves quite well without outside assistance. What people want is a reason to try, a goal to achieve, a belief to follow, a common purpose. These are the things that leaders are supposed to give them. These are the inspirations that create success for a team.

Motivation and inspiration include letting people decide for themselves that participation in attainment of the group goals is better than the alternatives. When this happy circumstance occurs, group performance will far outstrip the performance of the group of people that “need to be managed.” See Rule 10.

Finally, respect for others includes honesty. Nothing will destroy trust in the members of a group faster than perceived dishonesty – regardless of the scope of the dishonesty or the

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<sup>2</sup> Be wary of those who use words like “these people.” Very often they consider the actual objects of their phrase to be no more important than potatoes. For all intents and purposes, they do not consider people to be any more important than goats, bricks or dust bunnies.

motives. Good leaders would rather seek out almost any alternative to a situation – than tell a lie.

#### ***Rule 4 – Leaders trust people***

*Believe in your people first. They will look after the rest.*

Relatively few people in leadership positions are lucky enough to understand that we exist only because there is a group of people who expect specific things from us. The group expects us to lead.

This a significant consideration for leaders because these very same people are the instruments of success in leadership. They are the ones who are going to get done what is necessary in order for the group to attain its goal. And the group's attainment of the group goal is the only way leaders succeed. See Rule 9.

Imagine having people in the organisation who can tackle challenges and solve problems before they arise, and exploit initiatives before it becomes necessary to do so. These are the marks of an organisation in which people are not afraid of being reprimanded for making a bad decision. This is primarily because they are encouraged to make their own decisions. Good leadership will focus on providing them with tools to differentiate between the good and the not-so-good decisions. Good leaders will encourage them to take up the challenges themselves – and support their decisions.

We need to trust our team members to do the work that will result in overall success. We need to believe that they can do it. We need to trust them. If we do not, we will impede the team's success – and the resulting failure is solely the leader's responsibility. See Rule 12.

## CHAPTER 4 – WHAT DO LEADERS DO?

What are the set of behaviours most commonly exhibited by good leaders? This is a “how-to” part of this book.

Good leaders understand their function on their team. They know that they do not know everything. They have a very strong belief in the inherent goodness of others, and they also know that others may also have a strong desire to succeed. They focus their work as team leader on the accomplishment of the group goal.

This is not as altruistic as it may first appear. Most people in leadership roles also have a strong drive for success. But a good leader’s own definition of success has nothing to do with their own perceived value. It has everything to do with the success of their team. Within the success of the team, lies their own success. Such a personal goal can be very selfish and its continued attainment can be as addictive as a drug. It is often what drives extremely successful leaders from one impossible challenge to another.

Two things occur when a dispirited team of people accomplish a difficult task under impossible conditions. First, the interpersonal bond between the team members becomes very strong and enduring, and this can be perceived as rewarding in and of itself. Second, and all the members of the team recognise the part played by the leader in the effort that led to success. Very few rewards in life rival these for personal satisfaction – hence the addictive nature of such successes.

These are my rules for the what leaders need to do first to succeed when assuming a position of leadership, whether the position is bestowed or assumed.

### ***Rule 5 – Leaders get out of the way***

*The first goal of a true leader is to write his/herself out of the job – become dispensable. All parts of the organisation should be able to function without the leader’s direct intervention. The true leader need not worry about loss of job – there are always enough new challenges to prevent this occurrence.*

One of the biggest fallacies about the concept of leadership has to do with who is making the decisions. Many people in leadership roles believe they have to make most, if not all, the important decisions. Good leaders know better. The fewer decisions a good leader is called upon to make, the smoother the organisation is running.

Does this mean that team members will not make some bad decisions? It does not; people will still make some bad decisions. Whether or not anyone else on the team is willing to make any decisions at all following the “bad” one, depends a great deal on how the team leader handles the situation at that point. If team members learn that all bad decisions result in sanction, they will become bureaucrats – those people afraid to make any decisions at all. See Rule 11.

Lee Iacocca once said: “My job is to hire people smarter than me, and then get out of their way.” This statement is a bit simplistic, but the central message is clear.

Teams cannot accomplish anything without the effort of the team members. See Rule 10. Team members (people) do the majority of the work, and contribute the majority of the effort. It follows, therefore, that they will also make the majority of the decisions.

Consider one or two large scope, team-wide decisions made within an organisation. It should not surprise anyone that from these few broad decisions will come many more decisions of narrower scope as team members work to accomplish the overall team objective. All of these narrower decisions will be made by team members other than the leader.

Leaders must allow team members to get their work done, whatever that may be. Leaders need to get out of their way. Handing over the authority to team members to do what is needed is part of the set of responsibilities that must be delegated to them in order to achieve team success. See Rule 12.

### ***Rule 6 – Leaders provide continuity from day one***

*The first task of a leader is to name his/her successor. The people in the organisation need to know that there will be continuity of leadership. (See Rule 5 above)*

Good succession planning has the aim of providing stability within the team. People need stability in order to focus on the tasks at hand. See Rule 1.

There are some well-known group dynamics models where leaders promote instability in order to “get the best” from their teams. Examples include organisations such as brokerage houses and law firms where associates are encouraged to compete with each other so that the winners can reap the rewards of individual success. In most of these cases, the personal motivations are money or promotion. Overall and individual productivity is determined the key to organisational success. Hard work is supposed to pay individual rewards. The model encourages predatory behaviour, based on some sort of Darwinian approach to relationships – the strong survive and flourish, while the weak become casualties. Winners survive to become partners (leaders) – losers are replaced with new candidates.

The fallacies in this approach include a belief that the associates are part of one firm, when the reality is that they are each acting as their own one-person firm. Another fallacy is that competition for resources within the firm increases productivity. Overall and individual productivity actually suffers from lack of resources because individual team members are deciding for the team, based on their own need for success. Finally, trust between team members does not survive this type of behaviour and breaches of ethics are often accepted (and acceptable) outcomes.

The only reason this competitive approach to succession planning survives is because it tends to make more money for the senior partners (leaders??). See Rule 7. Outcomes for

the team are not considered important and the inevitable casualties among the associates are deemed acceptable.

Conversely, the stability promoted by a real continuity of leadership encourages teamwork. Succession is already decided and there is no need to jockey for position and promotion.

If the named successor is a reasonably capable stand-in, the absence of the leader will not affect the output of the team. We all know of circumstances where the named successor is often not up to the task, but reasonably capable leaders must appreciate they have to name a reasonably capable successor, if only for interim absences.

### ***Rule 7 – Leaders make it about something important***

*People will only follow leaders who believe in something more important than oneself. No person willingly follows someone whose first interests are self-serving. They will tolerate such a person, but they will not follow them.*

Successful leaders all play to the team. They use words that mean something to the people they are speaking to. They “sell” ideas to their team members.

Leaders that actually make a difference in our lives are those that encourage us to believe that our collective effort has real meaning. These leaders believe in something more important than themselves, and they try to motivate us to think the same way. Their own motivation is not money, or power, or personal success, or any glory. It is something else. It is something that has value in the belief systems shared by the whole team. Whatever “it” is, good leaders can instil it in the members of the team.

If the leader does not make the effort to communicate their own motives, team members will assume that the leader’s motives are selfish ones. Team members need to know what motivates their leader or they will assume a selfish motivation for the leader’s behaviour.

Conversely, some leaders may make it clear that their work is for their own gain and advancement or they may simply hide their motivations from their team. These leaders will be tolerated and endured, but they will not be followed.

Adherence to a belief in the face of much adversity should never be considered selfless. It is extremely selfish and the clear message to others is: “There are things I will do regardless of what you say, and there are things I will not do regardless of what you say.”

The most extreme examples of this type of behaviour are called “zealots” and they tend to frighten team members. They demonstrate so much zeal that they may adversely affect the success of the team. History has many examples that can be studied.

Making our motivation clear to our team members, promoting the belief within the team, and adhering to it, all make us more acceptable as leaders to our teams.

## **Rule 8 – Leaders accomplish only three things**

*Leaders need to do three things well to succeed, and they need to do them in the following order:*

- *Develop and articulate a vision for their team*
- *Sell the vision and its associated aims to everyone on the team*
- *Help the members of the team to achieve their aims.*

There are many things to consider when trying to understand successful leadership behaviours, but these are the only three skills leaders must exercise to succeed.

Within the team, the only person who can be responsible for nurturing the group vision is its leader. The leader does not need to be the person who comes up with the vision. It can come from one or many, from within or from outside the team. Once grasped, only the team leader can motivate the team to accomplish successful implementation. If the leader abrogates that responsibility, they will cease being the leader of the group. If no one else picks up the challenge, then the vision will die.

The development and articulation of the group vision is a leadership responsibility, regardless of who had the original idea. Developing it is less important than selling it. It must be articulated (sold) using words and in ways that are understood and accepted by team members and there may be as many ways to do this as there are team members.

This is a “whatever it takes” exercise and the leader’s personal opinion does not count. The only thing that counts is the motivation (sale) of a vision acceptable to the entire group.

Selling the idea (vision) to the team cannot be done by someone who believes that teamwork is defined as “everyone doing as the leader demands.” The selling includes instilling a need in team members based on something that bonds the group – a common element, value or belief. See Rule7.

If there is disagreement within the group on what the group should strive to achieve (the vision), then the leader is required to broker (facilitate) consensus to something more palatable to more people. For this exercise to succeed, the leader must acquire sufficient consensus so that everyone can support the result. Getting all team members to accept the selected vision is a true leadership challenge.

A leader’s final task in this effort is to facilitate individual and collective accomplishment of the group vision. Remove impediments. Resolve conflict. Maintain focus. Support. Coach. Listen. Provide resources.

Success in these three tasks will result in success for the team. That is how leaders contribute best.

## CHAPTER 5 – HOW DO LEADERS WORK?

What are the set of conditions that good leaders should establish in order to promote team success? What sort of environment provides the best opportunity for success in teams and assists successful leadership?

Once a leader understands the basic requirements for success in leadership, and is working to implement the basic success formula (See Rule 8), the only endeavour remaining is the support that enhances success of the team's effort.

These six rules are really about behaviours that promote successful attainment of group goals. They are about the same sort of things described in Chapter 4 – What Do Leaders Do? Although they follow from rules 5 through 8, they are just as important for success in leadership – and the attainment of group goals.

These are my rules for leadership processes that most enhance leadership success.

### ***Rule 9 – Leaders succeed only when their team succeeds***

*Leaders succeed only when the success of the team is written in the eyeballs of the members of the team.*

Leaders only succeed when the team succeeds. Success without the team is not leadership. It is individual achievement – and it has nothing to do with team or the role of a leader. See Rule 7. Success of the team is the only defining characteristic of successful leadership.

An understanding that success lives within the members of the team can crystallise our understanding that a leader needs the team members more than the team members need the leader. A team without a leader is still a team. A leader without a team cannot be a leader. See Rules 2, 3 and 5.

The set of behaviours demonstrated by team members are the best indication that an overall group goal is being achieved. As people achieve goals and objectives on the way to the group goal, they become more enthusiastic about overall success. Each small success makes the larger goal more real and possible. They are energised. As this process unfolds, the leader has already made a significant contribution to overall team success and the majority of leadership work is now directed at maintaining this momentum. See Rule 10 below.

One should not assume, from this, that true leaders motivate others for purely altruistic reasons. True leaders believe that helping others is just one more way to get something they want: the very personal and real gratification that comes from helping their own team succeed. This is the most common real motivation for successful leaders and it includes helping fashion success basking in its glow. As previously discussed, this is a

powerful drug and any financial or other success or recognition that accompanies the team success is only secondary.

## **Rule 10 – Leaders build team success from individual successes**

*Organisational success can be defined as the moment that the last person in that organisation adopts their portion of the organisational vision, the main proponent of which is the organisation's leader. In this way, the organisation can continue to function as a coherent whole, without the necessity of constant leadership intervention. (See Rules 5 and 6 above)*

Organisational success can be about achievement, but achievement is more often about the commitment of the organisation's most valuable coin – its people. Organisations are simply groups of people separated out by function and responsibility. These very same people are the key to an organisation's success.

When everyone on the team has accepted, and is working towards, the same goal, the organisation can become an unstoppable “juggernaut.” Changing its direction or stopping it takes energy and effort. The organisation has its own inertia and, if there are no impediments or forces of change operating, it does not require its leader to continue along the path established. All of the individuals within the group are proceeding down the common path. See Rule 5.

All kinds of forces, internal and external, can cause change or divert the group from its goal. Maintaining cohesion, direction and focus is an effort that involves the same skills needed to get started. In the face of a changing world, leaders must continue to: resolve conflict, remove impediments, coach, support, inspire and do all those other things that allow team members to succeed in their own responsibilities.

During those times a leader cannot be available to do these things, then the named deputy must be able to step into their shoes. See Rule 6.

## **Rule 11 – Leaders do not abrogate their own responsibilities**

*Not making a decision is never an option. A decision to do nothing is still a decision.*

While teams do not need leaders to make all the decisions all the time (See Rule \_\_), they do need their leaders to make decisions about choices that involve the whole team. Team members make decisions within their own scope of responsibilities, but the team leader is needed when it involves the whole team.

We have all seen situations when a manager or leader hopes that if they do nothing, the problem they are facing will go away. This does not promote confidence within the team. In fact, it does the opposite. This type of person demonstrates a lack of morale courage when required to make tough decisions and this characteristic diminishes the team's confidence in them.

Conversely, there are also circumstances where it is better to not act with too much haste. Sometimes situations can settle out to allow for more reasoned solutions to develop. This is not the same as avoiding a decision. It is a conscious decision to not act now, perhaps for the benefit of the overall efforts of the team.

The one constant between these two circumstances is a leader's willingness to face the tough decisions and not run away from them.

## ***Rule 12 – Leaders know how to delegate***

*Responsibility is the sum of the authority to do what is needed and the accountability for the results. No person can be responsible for something over which they have no authority, or for the results of which they cannot be held accountable. Authority is derived from the same entity that holds the individual accountable for the results – the organisation or person that delegates the responsibility.*

We have all heard of the term “empowerment” and this is really only a complicated way of saying that persons can influence the outcome of their own work because they have been given the authority to do what is required to accomplish their assigned aim. Often, organisations and individuals that use this term may not understand actual delegation of responsibility.

There are significant differences between “responsibilities” and “tasks.” A responsibility contains the authority people need to carry out their responsibilities in the way that best meets the needs of the organisation and the mission, as they perceive them. “Tasks” are only about doing work – not reaching objectives.

Conversely, an organisation that exercises no control on monitoring outcomes, may produce outcomes that bear no resemblance to what was asked or envisaged. There is no “accountability” for the work undertaken.

Both authority and accountability are required for responsibility to exist. In fact, responsibility can only be delegated if the delegate has the authority to do what is necessary to accomplish the aim. In order for the delegation to be effective, the organisation must also require the delegate to be accountable for their actions.

*Responsibility can be thought of as an arithmetic sum of Authority and Accountability. Whoever delegates responsibility, also delegates authority and imposes accountability.*

In order to illustrate this rule, consider a group of people that have been told exactly what, and where and how to do something. Sound a bit like slavery? That is exactly what responsibility without authority is – slavery.

What about responsibility without accountability? There are common examples available regarding groups of people who have substantial authority, but who tend to hide from examination for accountability. How can these persons be considered to have any

responsibilities if they are not accountable for the results of their work? Sound like politicians?

Only people delegate responsibility, even when they only represent a larger group. In other words, when a responsibility is delegated by someone to someone else, they have delegated the authority to get on with the responsibility, and they will hold the delegate accountable for the results. Both must agree, or the result of the effort will not be successful. See Rule 13.

Whenever a person delegates responsibility, they have also delegated the authority to do what is needed to accomplish the responsibility, and they will also be the sole arbiter of accountability.

### **Rule 13 – Leaders communicate vision effectively**

*The success of any meeting between two or more people rests solely with the person who wants the meeting. This is the person who has an idea or vision to transmit, especially if they wish other people to accept and act upon their ideas. Anyone having trouble accepting this truth should consider the person with the idea to be a vacuum cleaner salesman and then try to blame the housewife for his failure to sell her his idea – that she needs to buy his vacuum. Better still, consider the idea person to be an infantry battalion commander and then blame his soldiers for not getting the plan on how the unit is supposed to take their objective. If you try to allocate any of the responsibility for the successful outcome of these meetings to the housewife or the soldiers, consider whose responsibility it is to deliver clarity, establish understanding, and instil acceptance of the ideas being sold. Good Luck!*

There are many people who are not comfortable being held responsible for the effectiveness of their communication and the delivery of their ideas. See Rule 12. They believe that some of the responsibility for the effectiveness of their communication rests with the listener.

Such persons should not be given leadership responsibilities. They will blame their team members when things go wrong.

Leadership work most often manifests itself as the “sale of ideas.” See Rule 8. The more charismatic a person is, the more we tend to consider them leaders. They can “sell” us on their ideas. This is far closer to the truth than many would care to admit. Good leaders are good salespeople. The only difference is the reward received for the “sale.” Salespeople do it for the money or other personal reward. True leaders sell ideas for the reasons given in Rule 9 above.

In the example of the vacuum cleaner salesperson in this Rule, the idea that needs to be successfully sold to the housewife is that she needs (to buy) the vacuum cleaner. Successful sale of the idea would result in sale of the vacuum cleaner. See Rule 15. Failure to sell the idea results in failure to sell the vacuum cleaner.

When one accepts that the sale of the idea is the responsibility of the vacuum cleaner sales person in this Rule, it becomes easier to understand that the sales person is solely responsible for the effectiveness of their communication regarding the idea. This is such an important concept that we will now spend a few minutes trying to ascertain how to blame the housewife for not buying it.

(Pause)

Cannot be done.

It is not possible to lay any of the responsibility for the failure of the sale at the feet of the housewife. She may have decided against the purchase, but this is only because the sales person failed to sell her the idea. See Rule 15.

If we are in a meeting, and we wish to instill acceptance of an idea in the only other person at the meeting, the success or failure of the meeting rests entirely with us. We cannot blame the “listener” even if they are resistant to the idea. It does not matter if there are other issues involved such as conflict or other disagreement, or that the listener is a “lowly” subordinate and too afraid to disagree.

Motivating acceptance of an idea is still motivation. And motivation is a leadership function. Coercion is a very poor and ineffective substitute.

Eventually, we will all discover that there are some people on our teams who are not willing to try new ideas and may never accept a new idea until it has been proven acceptable to them. This reality comes with being responsible for the work of a team of people. It does not relieve the leader of the responsibilities to sell their ideas that impart a vision to this and other team members, and then motivate (instill) their acceptance.

Conversely, we may also perceive a member of a group who imparts vision and instills acceptance in their peers although they are not filling the appointment of leader or manager. These are people who “lead from within.” They are the real leaders of their group. The group may have appointed supervisors and managers, but they are not leaders.

## ***Rule 14 – Leaders listen more, and talk less***

*Effective communication consists of two parts listening and one part talking.*

One of the hardest things good leaders have to learn is that their view of the world is not universally shared by others. Team members use their own views of the world when they go through the decision process to buy, or not to buy, the leader’s vision.

Each person has their own view of what is important and what is not so important. Simply telling our team members how (or why) our own view is the better one, will not motivate their acceptance of our vision for the team. Leaders attempting to do so are missing any understanding of the team members’ view of the world. These are disconnecting viewpoints – and the conversations involved will not result in success.

A good example of this phenomenon is watching two people speak to each other in animated fashion, using a language the other cannot understand. No communication at all – just lots of animated talking.

When leaders speak in terms that are understood by the members of the team, they use the familiar language and terms. The language used reflects team member aspirations and viewpoints. Success in motivating attainment of a common goal is far more possible. See Rule 13. A common goal requires common understanding. This level of communication requires an understanding and acceptance of the points of view of the members of the team. Listening comes first.

In order to establish common understanding, we have to find common ground. That is the process of listening. This comes from day-to-day conversation, and appreciating the things that are important to each team member – or at least those we have the opportunity to deal with daily.

Good communication processes take far longer than simply telling others what we think – and it is the single greatest investment that leaders make in their team. Listening to determine common ground – to establish common understanding – to develop common goals takes time, effort, energy and patience. When we ask others to work hard for us, these are the things they want from us in return. It is a fair trade.

## CHAPTER 6 – THE TEAM ENVIRONMENT

Good leaders understand people. This final group of the rules are those tidbits of understanding that can help leaders influence the most basic of group endeavours. Establishing supportive group environments, relationships that include honesty, integrity and assumption of responsibilities can promote attainment of group goals. They will also create an atmosphere that energises team members.

This final set of rules relate to the processes of interaction between a leader and the team that will affect group success and relate to interactions beyond those with the leader.

### ***Rule 15 – Decisions are made by people***

*Companies do not make purchasing decisions. People do. People buy from others (including you) by going through the following purchasing sequence. (See Rule 13).*

- *First, they buy you*
- *Then, they buy your idea*
- *Finally, they buy your product or service.*

The most successful salespeople will tell you that a successful relationship with the customer is the most important pre-requisite to a sale.

The same is true between leaders and team members. If people trust a leader, they will follow them. If team members do not trust the leader, they will simply tolerate them. See Rule 7.

Leaders actually sell three things.

- Leaders sell themselves as an agent of team success,
- Leaders sell an idea that is a vision for the team, and
- Leaders sell the process of how to get from here to there.

In reality, good leaders know that they do not have to do it all themselves. More than one person may be significant agents for facilitating team success. Many more may participate in the development of the vision eventually adopted by the team. Finally, it is possible that everyone on the team can help develop and implement the processes that result in the attainment of the team objective based on the team vision.

Organisations that promote this approach within their teams will better appreciate the needs of their own market, and how to meet it...enhancing team success.

## **Rule 16 – People establish individual credibility**

*Anyone trying to make a presentation, teach others, or sell an idea to others will have their credibility based on the following criteria with the annotated weighting factor:*

- |   |   |                  |            |
|---|---|------------------|------------|
| • | <i>Physical appearance and movement</i> | <i>(Visual)</i>  | <i>55%</i> |
| • | <i>Quality and tone of voice</i>        | <i>(Vocal)</i>   | <i>38%</i> |
| • | <i>Content of the idea presented</i>    | <i>(Content)</i> | <i>7%</i>  |

Understanding people is key to being a successful leader and like it or not, leaders must understand the biases that affect people. The statistic shown above is universal and gives clear indication that people are more swayed by those things they like than by those things they do not. No surprise there.

The sad truth is that a very attractive person, with a pleasing voice (regardless of gender) will likely be believed by 93% of the persons they may meet. This is true even if their message is not true, assuming that none of the people they meet would know the truth anyway.

Conversely, if a person knows that the message being delivered is false, then it will not matter what the presenter looks like, or how they speak – but given a balance of possibilities – attractive and soothing will always win out over unattractive and annoying.

In order for the leader to positively influence the group environment, they must understand what enhances their own credibility. To sell a vision to the team, a leader must appreciate the advantages, and disadvantages, they face from the biases of people as shown by this simple statistic.

Good leaders know their strengths and their weaknesses, and they allow for them. Good leaders are honest with themselves, just as they are honest with the people on their team. See Rule 3. They are willing to make use of the advantages – for the reasons given in Rule 7, but they also know how to compensate for their own disadvantages.

Given this example from leaders within an organisation, the team members will more readily adopt similar approaches in dealing with other teams and with customers and stakeholders.

## **Rule 17 – Marketing is not sales**

*A sale is defined as the happy exchange of product or service for dollars. Marketing is defined as doing something today to ensure sales tomorrow. The process of marketing is the eliciting of a specific, desired behaviour from a specific target market.*

Leaders have to work on understanding their target market – that set of persons who are willing to endure them for whatever reason or even follow them. Understanding the

target market does more to ensure successful leadership endeavours than any number of contemporary sales techniques.

Marketing helps organisations create a business environment that fosters continued happy exchanges of group product or service for dollars (revenue). Marketing looks at the world through the eyes of the people in the target market. It addresses their hopes, their dreams, their desires, and their ideas.<sup>3</sup> The sole purpose of marketing is to elicit a specific desired behaviour from the target market.

These circumstances also hold true for leaders and their teams – their target market. What are the behaviours desired by the leader? Acceptance of a group vision by each individual, each individual's desire to play a role in its accomplishment, and the development of consensus around how to get there.

From Rule 15, leaders sell three things, that will never be fully “bought” by team members unless they are willing to accept a vision of the team, desire to see it implemented and agree on how to achieve it:

- Leaders sell themselves as an agent of team success,
- Leaders sell an idea that is a vision for the team, and
- Leaders sell the process of how to get from here to there.

Organisations that confuse these processes will sink resources into the sales effort without much success. For example, the terms “promoting” and “promotion” are often deemed marketing when these terms are clearly aimed at only one of the possible outcomes for a marketing effort. Marketing is not about promoting. It is about modifying behaviour. Without understanding the team (the target market) leaders will make the same mistake of confusing the outcome with the effort.

In organisations where this separation is well understood, sales success are achieved because the behaviours leading to sales are the primary target of marketing.

## ***Rule 18 – Communications is not marketing***

*The Communications function is a subset of Marketing. Marketing is about convincing the people in a target market to do something. Communications is about how to get the message to them that best motivates this desired behaviour.*

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<sup>3</sup> "Relevance, Originality and Impact" (R.O.I.) by William D Wells of DDB Needham Worldwide Inc, Prentice Hall, 1989, 96 pages + workbook, provides the most succinct method of examining and planning the marketing required to reach target markets. It provides answers to the following questions – around which can be built a successful marketing strategy:

1. What is the purpose of the marketing?
2. To whom will the marketing be directed?
3. What benefit will be promised and how will that promise be supported?
4. What personality will distinguish the brand?
5. When, where and under what circumstances will the target be most receptive to the message? What media will best deliver that message to that target?

We often hear about a communications effort underway somewhere to “promote” something. Usually government agencies use this term because they are not ready to concede that they need to market anything to anyone. They are government after all.

This example is really an attempt to undertake marketing, without calling it that and relying, instead, on just getting the message out. They are confusing the act of getting a message out with a desire to elicit a specific behaviour (See Rule 17) that will help them to meet their goals – whatever they may be.

Attempts to elicit a specific behaviour are marketing. The messages used to try and do that are communications. Communications processes are a subset of marketing.

Communications is the delivery stage of a marketing effort or marketing strategy. It does not work without the underlying marketing strategy. The very minimum that is required for communications to work is:

- an understanding of the target market,
- a listing of the benefits that being marketed in the messages, and
- a set of messages to deliver to the target market.

Communications plans without these pre-requisites presuppose an understanding of the target market – and of the messages that will elicit the desired behaviour. Delivery of a communications plan without an understanding of the target market is the single biggest impediment to marketing (and communications) success.

Communications plans restrict themselves to two considerations only, both of which require an understanding of the target market. In other words, when, and where are the most effective opportunities to deliver our message to the target market so as to elicit the desired behaviour? That is all communications does for a team – deliver the message. By itself, it is not enough to accomplish any group or team goal.

When one hears the phrase “getting the message out” the message itself must be one that elicits the specific desired effect of a target market – or the effort will not achieve the stated goals of this effort. Communications does not develop messages. It only delivers them. Developing the message is what is important – and that is a marketing function.

How does this affect leadership processes? Consider the desired behaviours in Rule 17 and appreciate that ALL communication emanating from the leadership of the team must openly support efforts to elicit them. Communications that do not do this will be counter-productive and impede the team in the accomplishment of its goals. See Rule 1.

### ***Rule 19 – Success is the result of a plan***

*A Business Plan is the articulation of business rules to live by and how to live by them. The same is true of Strategic Plans, Quality Management Systems, Marketing Plans, Corporate Plans, and so on. These plans tell organisations (us) about which things we are going to do. The hard part is defining what those things are. (See Rules 1, 8 and 10 above)*

When we understand that the most important component of our success is keeping our eye on the ball, it is not much of a stretch to knuckle down and write the plan that allows us to do this. There are many reasons a plan is important to the success of the effort:

- The plan, in whatever form it exists, allows everyone to concentrate only on those tasks that lead to success in the effort. See Rule 1. Done properly, it serves as a guide to help keep team members focused on what is needed – and not distracted by what is not needed.
- Everyone who participates in the effort needs to understand what the organisation is doing, where it is going, and how it intends to get there. See Rule 8. Leaders cannot assume that others will simply hear their words and instantly know what needs doing. That false belief is normally held only by megalomaniacs.
- Widespread use of the plan allows the organisation to more easily reach all team members so that everyone who influences the plan's success can be made aware of team direction without the constant intervention of the leader. See Rule 10. The team leader must still motivate its implementation. Simply issuing a document and telling people to get on with it, is not motivation. See Rule 13.

The most successful plans are those developed from consensus. Organisations that do not use consensus in their decision processes have two reasons for their approach. Both of these reasons are based on the fear that a wrong decision may be made and that only those with ultimate authority should make any important decisions:

- Consensus detracts from the “authority” of the leader, and
- Consensus gives too much authority to people without any expertise in the effort to be undertaken.

For as long as organisations believe that authority is about who makes the decision instead of how it is made, the first perception will continue to exist.

The second perception assumes that only the leader, or the designated expert in the effort (marketing, communications, business development etc) care enough about the success of the effort. It is believed that team members who do not identify significant interest will never really be concerned with outcomes and they will make incorrect decisions.

People who hold these beliefs lack self confidence. From positions of authority, they tend to want all team members concerned about everything but they also want these same team members to only have the authority for their individual tasks. Such people are not leaders and they are poor managers.

Consensus is best achieved through the maintenance of focus on the objective by the process facilitator (read coach, leader etc) and by allowing for the operational views of those who will implement it. Consensus requires the disciplined application of Rules 1 and 14, 15 and 17.

Maintaining focus on the aim is not the same as pushing personal ideas onto the group. Good leaders/facilitators understand that the only viable outcome to the process is a plan that is agreed by everyone responsible for its implementation. Organisational constraints

such as cost and effort must be stated up front as parameters for the group to work with. These plans have a much greater chance of success because challenges encountered during implementation can be successfully met by individual team members. Those executing the plan are aware of the overall aim and can overcome challenges without referring them to the leadership or expert.

Not all efforts require a plan, but the simplest guideline to follow is that if it involves more than the scope of authority of the person responsible for its development and/or implementation – a plan is needed. The more people involved in the effort, the more a plan is needed for its success.

### ***Rule 20 – People expend personal resources***

*All personal endeavour requires the use of four available resources. These are Energy, Knowledge, Time and Money. All of these are renewable resources, except Time.*

This rule is pretty self-explanatory. When we deliver, we call upon our knowledge and our energy. Occasionally our effort may involve money or capital. It always requires our time. These are resources for individuals, and they are the “coin” we spend in our efforts to achieve individual goals. As leaders, our individual goals are best expressed as the success of our teams. Our teams give value to our efforts. See Rule 10.

Leaders should also consider which resources are available for individual team members. Not all people on a team will have the same quantities of these resources at their disposal for the team task at hand. How much of each resource an individual can call upon is important for the effective delegation of responsibilities within the group. See Rule 12.

### ***Rule 21 – To serve and protect...***

*In my professional life, they are colleagues. In my personal life, they are the most precious creatures in the universe. (This one may get me into trouble.)*

Respect for others cannot depend on gender. In our work environments we cannot treat women different from men. See Rule 3 above. Leaders owe all team members the same respect. Leaders cannot differentiate their treatment of others based on the gender of the individuals on their teams. This is leadership by example.

However, I will always allow myself the peccadillo of cherishing the women in my personal life. It is my happy duty to offer them uncommon courtesy and protection. Doing so adds a little more meaning and definition to my life. This is my personal choice and I make it without apology.

It makes me smile.