

The Emerging Leader

Ask yourself this question: Are you followable? Do you think people want to follow you?

A few years back, I was working with a small group of executive leaders and I wanted to ensure that I was modelling what I was training and coaching. I had been considering some of the approaches I have used in the past to connect with groups, but this time I wanted to incorporate a new concept that would make the leaders really stop and think. The question just hit me – what if I simply asked them about the core of leadership. Do their teams really want to go where they are taking them? Are they ultimately followable?

We all agree that the leadership role is the most pivotal position in an organization. From big businesses to professional sports: a leader has the power to help their group succeed or fail. So, leaders must still be creative, take initiative, be visionary, but they also must also be individuals that others want to follow.

Succeeding as a leader whether you are new to the role or have a track record requires a broader perspective than ever before. Leaders must expand their intellects: IQ, EQ, and SQ [intelligent, emotional, social quotients] to better manage the many challenges organizations must be able to withstand. Emerging leadership today is about adding depth to the fundamentals of leadership at a functional level so that one can grow in their strategic leadership ability.

A 2018 study by Robert Half Global Human Resource Consulting found that “a bad manager is frequently cited as a key reason why employees quit their jobs.” With talent being a key driver of organizational success, the way we lead today and tomorrow is an important part of that equation. This means that being a person that others want to follow is where to start. Every action we take, every conversation we have, and even the things we do not do directly impact and determine whether people will want to follow us or not. Without followers, you cannot lead, manage, or grow.

The work that I have had the opportunity to develop with organizations across every industry over the past 3 years has allowed me to define and refine what it means to followable. Here the critical competencies needed for the “emerging leader” of tomorrow.

1. **Building strong interpersonal relationships.** Reporting staff members, colleagues, and executives respect your ability to demonstrate caring, collaboration, respect, trust, and attentiveness. Others depend on the leader/manager to treat colleagues with dignity and respect, to keep their word, to exude integrity, and display dependability and character under even the most challenging occurrences and challenges.
2. **Communicating and leading by example effectively.** From a communication perspective, this includes face-to-face, email, and in actions. As an emerging leader, we must be open to receiving feedback from colleagues and reporting staff, avoid defensive responses, and

be willing to change our behaviour when the feedback is on target. However, most importantly, the emerging leader understands and acts upon the power of interaction. They provide recognition when others do the same, walks their talk, and the team members know that the leader is the followable because they are consistent in the words and actions.

3. **Understanding the financial aspects of the business and sets goals, and measures success, and documents staff progress.** This allows the team to feel a sense of growth and that they are reaching goals and exceeding expectations. People want to know how they are performing against expectations at work. The effective emerging leader paints a vivid picture that employees can agree on and is effective at noticing progress when numerical goals don't exist.
4. **Develops growth mindset.** A growth mindset allows an emerging leader to create an environment where people experience positive morale, recognition, and employees are motivated to work hard for the success of the business. This leader understands that they are the most significant factor in employee's happiness at work. Their interaction with employees sets the tone for the workplace every day.

Along with this, a growth mindset helps people grow and develop their skills and capabilities through education and hands-on learning. The leader brings a career path to employees so that they continue to grow and develop. They make employee career and personal development a priority in the workplace. As a result, employees feel as if their manager cares about their personal journey. This is one of the most significant factors that employees need from work.

5. **Ability to stand up for their team.** Effective leaders/managers must have the confidence and ability to stand up for their teammates when an executive gives an order that isn't feasible or achievable. Leading others means facing fear and stepping through it, and unlike traditional leadership training, the CSPN Dimensions of Leadership Experience aspect is deeply discussed and developed. If we cannot stand up for our employees when there is pressure to conform, we might be a manager, but we will not be the effective emerging leader our people need us to be.

So, what I have shared is just a start, but this is a good start. Putting these ideas into action will go a long way for you to honestly answer the question – *are you followable?*

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With over 20 years in the learning, development and training industry, Corey is well known for his ability to connect with any audience at any size. He has provided participant focused learn and development design and consulting, professional speaking, coaching and training for organizations - of all sizes - across North America. He has a focused results-based partnership approach to develop and deliver customized solutions that meet an organization's unique business needs and resolve their most significant issues, helping them to create a lasting competitive advantage.