

## **HOPE-CENTERED LEADERSHIP: SOME PRACTICAL TIPS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Inspiring hope has been a more or less implicit leadership task, but until recently has not been included in leadership models. With the rise of a solid empirical foundation within the discipline of psychology, hopefulness is now being construed as a central characteristic of a leader and primary leadership task. This article briefly reviews the psychological foundations of hope, especially in the work of Snyder (1994), and Luthans and Avolio's (2003) Authentic Leadership model which applies Snyder's (1994) operationalization of hope to leadership. There is, however, very little literature on practical steps toward inspiring and developing hope in individuals and organizations. The present article aims to fill this gap by offering twenty-nine tips to inspire hope in individuals and organizations.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership has been defined in numerous ways. It has been defined, for example, as an integral part of group process (Green & Mitchell, 1979; Krech & Crutchfield, 1948) and as an influence process (Bass, 1960). Two of the key dimensions of most of these definitions are that leadership is a group phenomenon and is goal directed (Nahavandi, 2009). Nahavandi also provides this definition: "A leader is a person who influences individuals and groups within an organization, helps them in establishing goals, and guides them toward achievement of those goals, thereby allowing them to be effective" (p. 291).

Leaders, however, can be good or bad leaders, effective or ineffective. What is an effective leader? Leadership effectiveness can be defined in terms of group performance (Fiedler, 1978), follower satisfaction (House, 1971), and successful implementation of large-scale change in an organization (Bass, 1985, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Nahavandi espouses that effective leadership is based on goal achievement, smooth internal processes, and external adaptability by the group (Nahavandi, 2009).

There exist a plethora of leadership models. Earlier models include the contingency model (Fiedler, 1967), normative decision model (Vroom & Jago, 1988), path-goal theory (House, 1971; House & Dessler, 1974), attributional model (Green & Mitchell, 1979, Mitchell & Wood, 1980), and leader-member exchange (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). Somewhat more

contemporary models include neo-charismatic leadership (House, 1977; Conger, 1999), transactional leadership (Burns, 1978) with its contingent reward (Bass, 1985; Walker, 2006)) and management by exception components (Bass & Avolio, 1990), transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1998), spiritual leadership (Fry, 2005), value-based leadership (Moxley, 2000), and authentic leadership (George, 2007).

The concept of hope has begun to emerge in some models of leadership (Adams, Snyder, Sigman, & Pulyers, 2002; Helland & Winston, 2005). Peterson and Luthans (2003) and Luthans (2005) found that hope-centered leadership positively impacts organizational outcomes. Others have found that hope can play a central role in organizations in the areas of goal setting, innovation, and motivation (Helland & Winston, 2005; Snyder & Lopez, 2006).

Essentially, leaders need to understand that generating hope for potential followers can help them become a more effective leader. One remaining question is “How can I generate hope?” Consequently, the primary purpose of this article is to present a number of tips that can help a leader create hope. Let us begin with a review the psychological foundations of hope.

## **THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF HOPE**

Over the course of the past two decades hope theory has developed a solid empirical foundation based largely on the work of C.R. Snyder and his colleagues at the University of Kansas. Snyder (1995) defines hope as “the process of thinking about one’s goals along with the motivation to move toward (agency) and the ways to achieve (pathways) these goals” (p. 355). Some researchers have denigrated the validity of hope theory because early definitions of hope situated hope in the realm of the emotions (Stotland, 1969; Averill, Catlin & Chon, 1990). Snyder does not deny an affective component of hope; rather, he argues that previous definitions are incomplete or do not lend themselves to empirical investigation (Snyder, 1995).

Based on Snyder’s (1995) definition of hope, Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon (2002) propose a model of hope that consists of three essential components: goals, pathways thinking, and agency thinking. Goals are assumed to motivate behavior. On this basis it can be said that hope is future oriented. Pathways thinking “signifies one’s perceived capabilities at generating workable routes to desired behaviors” (Snyder et al., 2002, p. 258). High hope individuals are capable to developing multiple strategies toward achieving their goals. Agency thinking is “the perceived capacity to use one’s pathways so as to reach desired goals (Snyder et al., 2002, p. 258). In hope theory, both pathways thinking and agency thinking act in concert. This point is critical in distinguishing hope from other, related constructs such as optimism and self-efficacy.

Seligman’s (1991) optimism construct is concerned with how people explain negative events in their lives. Individuals who attribute negative events to external, variable, and specific causes, in contrast to internal, stable, and global causes, are said to be optimistic (Seligman, 1991). Self-efficacy differs from hope theory in two important ways. First, self-efficacy is thought by Bandura (1997) to operate in specific contexts; hope is thought to operate across many contexts. Self-efficacy as an estimation by a person that one can engage in a particular behavior, whereas hope goes beyond possibility to intention, or willingness, to carry out a particular behavior (Snyder et al., 2002).

Hope has been shown to positively impact academic (Snyder, Cheavens, & Michael, 1999; Snyder, Hoza, Pelham, Rapoff, Ware, et al., 1997) and athletic performance (Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, Rehm, 1997), physical health (Snyder & Feldman, 2000), psychological adjustment (Affleck & Tennon, 1996; Snyder, 1996; Snyder, 1994; Tennon & Affleck, 1999) psychotherapy outcomes (Snyder, Ilardi, Michael, & Cheavens, 2000), interpersonal relationships (Snyder et al., 1997), and life satisfaction (Bailey, Eng, Frisch, & Snyder, 2007).

Two models of leadership have been developed recently that explicitly include hope as an important variable: positive approach to leadership (PAL; Luthans, Luthans, Hodgetts, & Luthans, 2001) and authentic leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). The latter is reviewed here as it represents Luthans' more recent leadership model. Luthans & Avolio (2003) define authentic leadership as:

“A process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development” (p. 243).

The authors go on to define an authentic leader as “confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, transparent, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and gives priority to developing associates to be leaders” (p. 243). They assert that these characteristics of leaders are not traits, but states that can be developed. While there are many interesting aspects of the Authentic Leadership model, it is particularly noteworthy that Luthans and Avolio drew on the hope theory of Snyder (1994). If, as Luthans and Avolio (2003) aver, authentic leaders make it a priority to develop future generations of authentic leaders, then inspiring and fostering hope in followers will be central to the leadership development activities of a leader.

In the months preceding the presidential election of 2008 Americans witnessed a resurgence of hope in American politics that had not been seen since Kennedy or, perhaps, Roosevelt's New Deal. One of Barack Obama's primary messages was one of hope. Campaign slogans such as “Change we can believe in” and “Yes we can” are brilliant demonstrations of Snyder et al.'s (2002) hope theory. “Change we can believe in” is an excellent example of Snyder et al.'s (2002) pathways thinking. By offering alternatives, especially alternative solutions that differed radically from the previous administration, then Senator Obama was offering other routes toward achieving the goals of financial prosperity and social policy in the United States and political and military stability in the Middle East. The economic, political, military, and social ends may not have changed as much as the means to achieving those ends were (and are) construed differently. Obama capitalized on the electorate's desire for a clear alternative from President Bush's policies. It could be argued that John McCain did not do enough to demonstrate that his policies represented a clear alternative to President Bush.

But to propose an alternative route to success is not enough according to Snyder's hope theory. Individuals must also have a sense of agency. Agency involves more than simply a belief that one can engage in a particular behavior (self-efficacy), but also the intention to do so. President Obama's campaign slogan “Yes we can” is a prime example of agency thinking. On election

night in Chicago at Grant Park, hundreds of thousands of people rallied to the chant, “Yes we can! Yes we can!” In President-elect Obama’s November 4, 2008 speech that night, he emphasized personal responsibility as he had throughout his campaign. He urged his supporters to get involved and take action, “So let us summon a new spirit of patriotism; of service and responsibility where each of us resolves to pitch in and work harder and look after not only ourselves, but each other.” The question for leaders, including President Obama is *Does a call for action lead to action?* The larger question is *Does inspiring hope in others lead to more, creative problem-solving solutions AND a willingness to act in accordance with organizational goals?* In the following section, we offer tips that may lead to increased organizational hopefulness.

## **PROVIDING HOPE TO FOLLOWERS**

Great leaders find ways to provide hope to their followers and potential followers. Consequently, an aspiring leader should seek ways to boost hope. Leaders should evaluate the entire range of leadership tools and develop a set that fits the hope-centered concept. These tools will call for the leader to use words, actions, and attitudes to focus on building hope and optimism for a better future.

When a new individual assumes a position of leadership, many individuals (but not all) are naturally hopeful that the new leader will lead the group to a better situation. The new leader should focus on enriching this hope and avoiding things that reduce hope.

In general, generating hope involves painting a picture the future that is better than the past and present situation. Show them that things are going to change for the better, and without great upheaval.

One of the authors once heard someone describe a ‘burning platform’ approach. In order to get a group to follow the leader, the leader can either convince the group that (1) the present ‘platform’ is burning and the group should follow the leader off the platform, or (2) there is a much better platform (future) to which the leader can guide them.

Another way to view hope-centered leadership from the leader’s perspective is as follows:

1. Review the past and present,
2. share a vision for a better future, which should generate.....
3. hope, which should generate.....
4. motivation, which should lead to.....
5. action, which should lead to.....
6. group achievement.

The remainder of this article presents and discusses various tips that the leader can use to help generate hope and/or avoid reducing hope among followers. The reader will see that the tips are drawn from many and various leadership approaches.

## 1. Pay Attention To The Style Of Your Predecessor.

The style used by your predecessor, and its results, can have a great influence on which is the best approach for you to use. Even if you follow an excellent leader, there may still be areas in which followers are hopeful for changes. Your predecessor, for example, may have been very good, but perhaps a little distant from the followers. If a sufficient number of your potential followers are hopeful for a warmer, more humanistic environment, perhaps your words and actions could fulfill this hope.

*One executive tells of following a “dictatorial autocrat” who had destroyed the morale, motivation, and initiative of the entire organization. The approach he was successful with involved a heavy dose of “healing.” And, he had to generate hope among the workers that the future did NOT involve a dictator or autocratic leader.*

*He goes on to tell of his next position, in which he followed a world-class “nice guy” who provided very little guidance for the group. When our executive took over the organization, he adapted his approach more toward being an aggressive but caring leader. Here, he had to demonstrate that he had a promising vision, and competence to lead them to that vision.*

**Corollary:** Ignoring your predecessor’s style can allow you to do things the same way, thereby dashing hope for positive change.

## 2. Demonstrate That You Are NOT Working On A Personal Agenda.

Some leaders destroy the group’s collective hope for a better future when they show that they are only concerned about themselves. Successful leaders generally show followers that they really want to be in their present position.

Everyone possesses some ambition. Show only a little of it. Leaders who are publicly and blatantly ambitious can sometimes create distrust among followers. Have you ever heard statements such as “Well, he will not be with us very long – we can just do our jobs and ignore his exhortations” or “Every decision is made with her next promotion in mind”?

If your followers find out that you are conducting regular job searches, you may begin to lose their support. One executive shared the following:

*Several years ago I was contacted by a head hunter about a “dream job.” In my continuous effort to be open with everyone, I dropped a few casual comments about it. The story quickly made the rounds and the reaction stunned me. Some people were angry about my “disloyalty” while others simply became disinterested in anything I had to say. I did not take the job and it took me several months to recover. I learned a valuable lesson about keeping my ambition corralled.*

**Corollary:** Show your group that your personal agenda is more important to you than the group’s agenda, and the group simply cannot have any hope for a better future.

### **3. Show Your Enthusiasm For The Job.**

What is enthusiasm? It is a positive emotion that results from the excitement human beings feel about an activity or event. True leaders feel excited and passionate about their job, which shows in their verbal and non-verbal communication. That is why true leaders can think of many good things that they can envision and do for their organization. They continuously think about something new and different that can help their followers feel more motivated, excited, and hopeful.

If you do not feel enthusiastic about your work and your organization, it is time for you to reexamine your attitudes towards the profession you are in, and you will have to be as honest with yourself as one can possibly be. Try to determine the source of your lack of enthusiasm -- is it you, the work environment, or both? When you find out the possible reasons, then you will have to take the necessary steps to deal with the situation constructively. This is extremely important, because if for any reason you lost your enthusiasm toward your work, your followers will soon lose their enthusiasm toward their work too, and the result could be a negative impact on the quality of work and life for you and your followers.

**Corollary:** If you show the opposite of enthusiasm – apathy and disinterest – the group will not be hopeful for the future. Would you want to follow a leader who is apathetic and disinterested in the job? Would you have any hope for a brighter future?

### **4. Show Your Commitment – Commit To Greatness.**

You cannot do great things with a mediocre commitment. The primary difference between those who achieve great results and those who settle for a mediocre outcome is *commitment*. And, only 100 percent commitment is acceptable. If you are 99 percent committed, the probability that you will achieve some outcome other than excellence is 100 percent!

Committed people go far beyond the regular call of duty to achieve extraordinary goals, and leadership is about *commitment to greatness*. Teachers who are not committed to teaching cannot expect their students to commit themselves to learning, and leaders who are not committed to great results, cannot expect their employees to be committed to high quality performance.

Part of this commitment involves hard work. You cannot be a *casual leader* who is perceived as working at a minimal level. You must demonstrate that you are dedicated to getting the job done and are willing to work hard to do it. Essentially, you must lead by example.

**Corollary:** Show your followers that you are NOT committed to moving the organization forward and you will destroy any hope for a better future.

### **5. Torpedo The Status Quo.**

You must help your followers understand that the status quo is absolutely unacceptable. Remember that old adage, ‘If you are not moving forward, then you are backing up’. Acceptance of the status quo implies that the organization is doing acceptably well, which is unacceptable.

One executive comments that in every job interview, he has made a statement something like “If you do not want changes, then take me to the airport!” Such an attitude helps to break down barriers to change and progress.

**Corollary:** Embracing the status quo prevents the possibility for change, which destroys hope for a better future.

## **6. Show Them That You Believe What They (The Group) Are Doing Is Extremely Important.**

People generally are more motivated when they are doing something that they know is important. And, people often want their job to be important. So, what about those whose job are less important to the organization? It is up to the leader to show that EVERY job is important. For example, what about the person who sweeps the floor at a grocery store – how important is that? Well, how many customers want to shop at grocery store that has dirty floors?

**Corollary:** Show people that their job is unimportant and you will destroy motivation and hope for the future.

## **7. Build A Sense Of Community.**

Attitudes and preferences of younger workers continue to evolve over time. It is becoming more apparent that these individuals are placing a high value on collegiality and civility in the workplace. One of the best ways to promote these workplace characteristics is to foster a sense of community among all of the stakeholders. When individuals feel a sense of community, they tend to be more hopeful about the future of the organization.

Enhancing a sense of community generally involves a multitude of actions, such as celebrations (e.g., for promotions, birthdays), social gatherings for the workers, social gatherings for entire families, weeding out employees who damage the sense of community, and so on.

**Corollary:** When organizations lack a sense of community, individuals tend to lack hope.

## **8. Demonstrate That You Want To Create A Stage Upon Which Your Followers Can Perform.**

There is an old story told in the South about Bear Bryant. He was riding by campus late one night with a visitor who asked him about a light still being on in the athletics office. Bear’s response was “That’s just Joe \_\_\_\_\_ working to make me look like a genius.”

Your performance as a leader is important. But, your long term success will be determined by the performance of your followers. You must surround yourself with talented people who can get the job done. Then, you must create a situation in which your followers can excel and let them do it!

**Corollary:** Demonstrate that you are NOT concerned about your followers’ performance and you will destroy any hope that doing a good job will be recognized and rewarded.

## **9. Be Absolutely Truthful and As Open As You Can.**

True leaders are absolutely truthful and as open as they can be in their personal and professional relationships. A leader must create an environment in which there is no perception of secrecy and secret deals behind closed doors. The leader's truthfulness and openness contribute to creation of culture of trust and hope that results in a more cohesive and collaborative organization.

You need to practice openness. But, you must also practice being circumspect with information. This goes far beyond the confidential nature of certain information. Some information may not be confidential, but it may be something that you do not need to say. Examples include comments such as "Joe is thinking about transferring" and "Sue does not like Rachel."

You do not have to be so open that you share every piece of information with your followers. If you do so, you might cause information overload, which might make your followers feel overwhelmed with information that could be unnecessarily time consuming and negatively affect their performance. And, you followers might begin to ignore you and your communications.

**Corollary:** Being untruthful and closed destroys hope.

## **10. You Will Make Mistakes – Admit Them And Recover In Style.**

Individuals with a traditional management mentality often have two negative characteristics: (1) they do not admit their mistakes, and (2) they try to pin the blame of their own mistake on others.

Unfortunately, there are still some people with this mentality in leadership positions in all kinds of organizations today. You must remember that individuals in leadership positions live in a glass house – your followers are watching you. Your mistakes are most likely to be known by many, so your best approach is to admit the mistake, find out why things went wrong, determine how to prevent the same mistakes from happening again, and move on with pride on your side. Further, if you are the type of leader with a rich trusting relationship with others, your associates and followers can easily overlook your mistakes.

**Corollary:** Refusing to admit your mistakes or blaming them on someone else destroys hope and optimism for the future.

## **11. Lead, Follow or Get Out Of The Way.**

A good leader knows how and when to lead, to follow, and to get out of the way. Since you cannot lead in every situation, know how to follow another leader. Sometimes, however, following may not be relevant – you may simply need to step aside and let others do the job.

**Corollary:** The absence of this skill prevents your followers from moving closer to achieving their potential, thereby reducing hope for a better future.

## **12. Your Long Term Success Is Predicated On Improving The Quality Of Your Followers.**

On your last day on the job, what would you choose as the single most important evaluative criteria for judging your success? In many situations, if you have been able to improve the overall quality of your followers, you will have been successful. Most of the other issues will have been taken care of by good, talented followers.

**Corollary:** Any approach that decreases the quality of your followers will be easily recognized, which will decrease hope.

## **13. Demonstrate That You Are Very Concerned About Both People And Tasks.**

Blake and Mouton (1985) developed a Managerial Grid that contains two dimensions: task orientation and people orientation. Based on these two 9-point dimensions, they identified different management styles: one that places the highest emphasis on task and the least emphasis on people (9,1), another one that puts the highest emphasis on people and the least emphasis on task (1,9). The third one is in the middle of the road with half emphasis on task and the other half on people (5,5), the fourth one does not really care about either task or people dimension of the job (1,1), the fifth one that seemed to be the most desirable places a high degree of emphasis on both task and people (9,9), which is called the TEAM style of management. The Team style is most desirable because an authentic leader understands that both tasks and people are equally important to the survival and success of the organization as well as the organization as a whole – without giving a careful attention and the support to your people, the organization's goal will not be achieved, and without accomplishing the organization's goals, the organization will not be able to survive in the long run. As a result, a good leader understands the interdependency between these two significant dimensions, which are crucial to the survival, let alone the success of the organization and the organization.

Overall, you must be good at handling both tasks and people. This skill demonstrates competence and enriches hope for a better future.

**Corollary:** Overemphasis on either tasks or people to the exclusion of the other portrays a lack of competence, thereby reducing hope.

## **14. Treat Everyone With Respect.**

*Respect cannot be demanded, it must be earned.* Yes, you can earn a certain amount of respect by demonstrating a high level of knowledge, skills, and ability to get the job done. But, earning true respect is based largely on demonstrating respect for others. Respect is truly a two-way street. Here are two related issues:

- ✓ *Treat everyone with dignity.* Treating people with dignity creates followers. Ignore individuals' dignity and they will abandon you.
- ✓ *Assume the attitude that "everyone is valuable."* Even the worker who is paid minimum wage is making a valuable contribution – otherwise, why are you paying them?

**Corollary:** Disrespecting people can create severe morale problems, thereby reducing hope for a better future.

### **15. Treat Everyone Fairly.**

This is a *double-sided* tip. You must learn to treat followers that you dislike just like you treat everyone else. It can be more difficult for some potential leaders, however, to learn to treat people you like just as you treat everyone else. Your followers must trust you! Treating everyone with an even hand will garner respect.

A somewhat specific corollary is: *Do not make 'back room' deals.* A 'back room' deal with a follower can be viewed as a deal not offered to everyone and as one that you want kept confidential. Such deals are often viewed as unfair by others. This also can be viewed as another form of manipulation or even as an ethical issue.

**Corollary:** Treating any individual unfairly can be resented by many individuals, thereby reducing hope.

### **16. Respect Others Opinions, Even If You Disagree.**

People like to be listened to! You must listen and respect others' opinions, even if you disagree with them. You can disagree as long as you do it tactfully and diplomatically – learn to disagree without being disagreeable. *One executive was heard to respond to a comment in an open meeting "You may be right but, at this time, I do not think that I can agree with you." This comment actually diffused a tense meeting and demonstrated that he had an open mind.*

**Corollary:** Ignoring or disrespecting others' opinions creates resentment and reduces hope.

### **17. Achieve The Reality And Perception Of Being Fair And Ethical.**

In this day and age, it is imperative that leaders conduct themselves in an ethical manner and strive for fairness in their dealings with others. This is a reality. Consider these questions every time you face a decision issue: Is this decision fair and ethical? Will this decision be *perceived* as fair and ethical? The reality and others' perception of reality are both important. Be sure with each decision that you would be comfortable explaining the decision on the nightly television news!

**Corollary:** Showing followers that you are unfair diminishes hope for a better future.

### **18. Your Word Is Your Bond.**

This old homily is still around because it is still relevant. Essentially, if you make a promise or even a declarative statement (an implied promise), you have given your word. You must fulfill any promise you make or your followers think you made. Consider this from a then new Dean of a business college.

*I inherited a situation in which several faculty members had been denied a promotion and had appealed. The Vice President, rather than hearing the appeals, tabled the situation until the new Dean (me) could get involved. I held a meeting with each faculty member and his or her Department Head to get up to speed on their respective situations. During the meeting, I kept an upbeat attitude and promised each one that I would evaluate their situation carefully. Well, I overdid it! After deciding against the promotions and issuing the pertinent memo, I received a call from one of the faculty members who said that “I thought you said that you would support my application.” I immediately backpedaled and said that I would call him back in a few minutes. I then called his Department Head and asked him if he thought that I had made that promise – he said “yes.” I then called each Department Head and received the same answer. I realized that I had made an implied promise; I chose to stand by that promise. So, I called the VP and explained my rookie mistake. I also changed my recommendation to match the implied promise. I felt that standing by my word was more important in the long term than whether or not each individual was promoted.*

**Corollary:** Show people that they cannot depend upon what you say, and you will kill all hope for a better future.

## **19. Deal With Conflicts Smoothly.**

The best way to deal with confrontations is to arrange things so that no one ever sees a need for the confrontation. Unfortunately, they will still arise and you will have to deal with them. Here are a few suggestions:

- ✓ Even if surprised, quickly determine your objective and do not lose sight of it.
- ✓ Define winning. Your objective should not be to win the confrontation. Rather, it should be to achieve an objective.
- ✓ De-personalize the situation. Leaving the problem-issue to float directly between two individuals can lead to personal attacks. Try to visualize putting the problem-issue up against the wall so that the two of you can get ‘shoulder to shoulder’ and look at it objectively.
- ✓ Use a collaborative approach. Try to convince the other party that the best way to deal with the problem is working together, using creative thinking to come up with a constructive solution that results in full satisfaction for both sides. The four significant advantages of this approach are: (a) it encourages people to work together, (b) it encourages creative thinking, (c) it depersonalizes the situation, and (d) it helps to reach a decision that brings full satisfaction to all involved. Keep in mind that collaborating is different from compromising, because in compromising, people do not have to work together, and the decision can lead to only partial satisfaction for both parties.

**Corollary:** Demonstrating an inability to handle conflicts effectively kills optimism and hope.

## 20. Mediate Disputes Smoothly.

Even in a highly cohesive group, conflict and disputes can arise between two or more individuals, and it is all due to the fact that we perceive people and things differently based on our attitudes, personality, experiences, interests, and ambitions. Therefore, you must be able to mediate an occasional dispute between your followers. The most effective way to handle disputes involves anticipating potential conflicts and either arranging things so that conflicts do not occur or developing a process to handle them creatively. This means that you, as leader, must know the attitudes, personalities, experiences, interests, and ambitions of your followers.

If a dispute erupts despite your best defusing efforts, then you should invite the disputing parties to a meeting at a time and place reasonably comfortable for both. If possible, provide some refreshments in order to make the atmosphere a little more informal. Ask each party to express his or her concerns and frustrations in a professional and non-personal manner, while you and the other party listen very carefully. Then, encourage them to collaborate to generate a solution that can lead to full satisfaction for both -- it might not be easy, but it can work well in most situations.

So, what if the above “velvet glove” does not work? You might have to use a “hammer.” One executive shares the following:

*At a previous job, I inherited a good set of managers. But, I was warned that two of them had some serious personal animosity towards each other. Things went smoothly for several months. Then, the inevitable eruption occurred, and it was over something trivial. They began to zing each other in the meeting, which I stopped. Then, they continued the barrage via e-mail, including copying me. I felt that we were far past the velvet glove, so I called a meeting for the next morning. Once they arrived in the reception area, I invited them in and stated in a very calm voice, “Gentlemen, since this will take only a minute, you do not have to sit down. I have two things to say. First, I am very happy to have each of you as managers. Second, this zinging contest is over. My managers do not have zinging contests. You do not have to shake hands or hug, but it is over. Have a nice day.” You could have knocked them over with a feather! They worked together effectively for seven more years and never had a cross word, even though they still did not like each other. The story of my handling of the incident also spread quickly and solidified my reputation of preferring the velvet glove while having the ability to deploy the hammer if necessary.*

**Corollary:** Allowing disputes to fester and erupt, dashes hope for a better future.

## 21. Listen, Listen, Listen.

Far too many people are poor listeners. A good leader is definitely a good listener. Further, a good leader is able to get people to talk so that he or she can listen. Many years ago, one of the authors had dinner with his boss and two wealthy business people. The boss demonstrated an amazing ability to ask questions. The other people left the dinner thinking that the boss was one

of the smartest people they had ever met – all because he *asked questions and listened attentively!*

**Corollary:** Failure to listen leads others to understand that their opinions and views are not important to the leader, thereby dashing hope.

## **22. Always Consider People’s Emotional Connection to Issues That Are Important To Them (Not Necessarily To You).**

Everyone obviously has a different perspective of the world and of specific issues. While the leader should be highly concerned with the organization’s major issues, he or she cannot ignore seemingly unimportant issues that are of major significance to followers. Sometimes, individuals can be highly emotional or passionate about even small matters. Leaders must anticipate such situations and be sensitive and responsive.

**Corollary:** Failure to anticipate and respond to such highly charged issues, can destroy hope and lead to antagonism and even rebellion.

## **23. Strive To Be Both Direct and Diplomatic.**

Unfortunately, too many individuals are either tactful or direct, but not both. In dealing with your followers, you can be both. Being direct simply means being clear and not obtuse. Being tactful means that you choose your words carefully and deliver the message in a caring and considerate manner. It is truly high praise when followers consider you to be both diplomatic and a ‘straight shooter’.

**Corollary:** A lack of directness creates an unknown element and a lack of diplomacy can be construed as rudeness, and either dashes hope.

## **24. Strive To Be Open-Minded.**

Followers like leaders who have opinions and beliefs, but who are open to new information and ideas. One executive related the following story:

*When I was a young executive, I got to know a senior executive who appeared to be a good leader and was a potential mentor for me. As our casual conversations began to take on more substance, I began to detect what I considered to be a fatal flaw. Neither I nor anyone else could have an open, free flowing discussion with him. He was very good at making you think he was open-minded, but all the time he was herding you towards his original position. It became quickly apparent to me that he was a decent manager, but had no followers due to this fatal flaw.*

**Corollary:** Close your mind to your follower’s ideas and they will lose hope.

## **25. Be A Role Model of Ethical and Personal Responsibility.**

In today's highly competitive global environment long term survival of all organizations depends on several key factors, one of which is commitment to ethical behavior. Ethics and personal responsibility go hand in hand. The principle of ethics holds that true leaders must think and act beyond their legal obligations and/or economic reasons to show that they care about "doing the right thing." What is the connection between being a role model and ethical and personal responsibility? Leadership is an act of influence more than anything else, and Vroom and Jago (1988) said that leadership influence has to be intentional and non-coercive. You as a leader must purposefully but non-forcefully influence your followers' attitudes and behaviors toward a more positive direction. Therefore, you must become a good example for your followers to look up to as a person committed to ethics and personal responsibility. Many individuals in leadership positions do not realize the extent to which they influence their employees' behavior by virtue of their own behavior, but it happens much more than they think.

**Corollary:** Unethical and irresponsible behavior dampens hope for a better future.

## **26. Inspire The Troops.**

A good leader inspires his or her followers. You should attempt to convert simple jobs and projects into *quests*. Ongoing inspiration for the members of the organization is as important as blood flow in human body. What you need to remember that human beings do not get excited and inspired by ordinary news, activities, or events. Consequently, you should be able to make your followers understand the connection between the smallest tasks to the larger vision (master goal) for the organization. You should be able to make your followers feel excited and inspired by reminding them that the projects they are involved in might be small in scope, but will eventually lead to a bigger and better outcome for the whole group.

**Corollary:** If you cannot inspire your followers, no one can be hopeful for a better future.

## **27. Cheerlead And Praise Whenever Possible.**

Good leaders must become adept at cheerleading and praising. One individual, for example, said that his greatest adjustment when assuming a president's position involved the much more frequent and greater need for delivering "attaboys." Throughout his career, he had frequently been on the receiving end of praise. His adjustment was to the fact that he no longer received many attaboys and he had to become more adept at delivery. Praise can sometimes be just as important as monetary incentives.

**Corollary:** The lack of praising (or much criticism) destroys hope.

## **28. Celebrate Success.**

All organizations have positive milestones or peaks. In addition to delivering appropriate praise, take the time to celebrate with those who helped achieve the milestone. Your specific situation

will dictate ‘what are’ and ‘what are not’ appropriate forms of celebration. It can range from things like complimentary tickets to an event to a major celebration (e.g., banquet).

**Corollary:** The lack of celebrations is a missed opportunity for confirming hope.

## **29. Servant Leadership.**

Robert Greenleaf (1977) once said that great leaders view themselves as “servant first” (p. 12), and that this mentality is the key to leadership effectiveness. The first and most important goal of any leader is to serve the relevant group to the best of his or her ability – this approach provides the group with its best opportunity to achieve its goals. Becoming a servant leader is predicated on a genuine belief in that goal, and you must demonstrate it in your actions and interactions with others. This mentality can shape your followers’ behavioral norms – good behavior is contagious! Servant leaders do so much for so many people so sincerely that it creates in others an equally sincere desire to imitate and reciprocate.

Contrast the servant leader to the individual who plays the role of “god/king” or “buck sergeant.” This individual assumes the mantle of infallibility and omnipotence. Perhaps a few people in the world can make this approach work, but there are many approaches that work much better.

**Corollary:** If you are not serving your followers by leading them to a better future, the implications may be that (a) you view their existence as being to serve you and/or (b) your followers will perceive you as a self-serving leader, and lose any hope for finding brighter days ahead.

## **SUMMARY**

The leader who can generate hope among his or her followers is practicing hope-centered leadership. Many of the world’s great leaders have utilized hope as a key component of their leadership approach. Hope is also anchored strongly in the field of psychology. The existence of hope should generally lead to motivation, action, and better group performance.

The key question for the leader who wants to become a hope-centered leader is: *What can I do to become a hope-centered leader.* This article provides a wide variety of action oriented tips designed to enhance hope among followers.

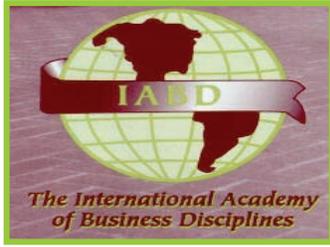
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