



# Leaders to Follow

## LEADERSHIP LESSONS II

By Sara Tusek

After 24 years of helping people of all ages and many nationalities to develop their leadership potential, the International Leadership Institute has distilled the essence of leadership into six simple lessons.

This issue will deal with the last three lessons; August 2008 covered the first three lessons of leadership. The three leadership lessons of the August 2008 issue were:

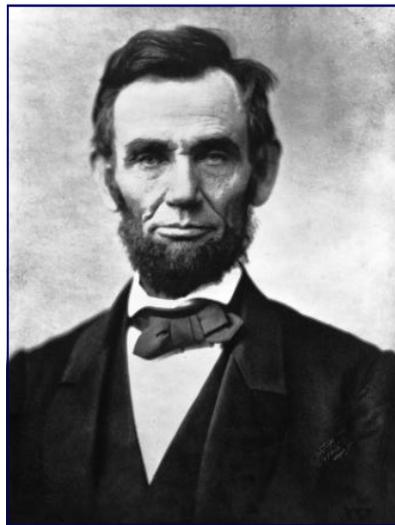
- *Be organized and focused;*
- *Don't be diverted;*
- *Imagine the outcomes of your decisions and policies.*

### PLAN A & PLAN B

Positive thinking is powerful and affirming, but you, as a responsible leader, can't afford to envision only the outcomes you're trying to achieve. You should have several contingency scenarios, based on both the most positive developments in a particular situation and the most negative.

The 16th President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, certainly understood and acted on this insight. Lincoln was not an ideologue; he didn't have one framework of principles by which he made all decisions. Instead, Lincoln was a pragmatist, always armed with many solutions to problems, making sure he was prepared for any eventuality.

To do your best every day as a leader, be sure you've thought through the consequences of your decisions and actions, and that you're ready to deal with both positive and negative outcomes. You'll encounter plenty of both over the years!



***"I never had a policy; I have just tried to do my very best each and every day." --Abraham Lincoln***

### DON'T IGNORE CHALLENGES TO YOUR AUTHORITY

Nothing is so irritating as to spend significant time on a proposal, only to be met with quick and fierce criticism from people who didn't offer any help and have little grasp of the reality of the situation. You might call these annoying people "the uninvolved and the uninformed," and your first impulse might be to ignore them, as they deserve.

But there's a real danger here of losing the chance to gain valuable information and food for thought from those who challenge your ideas and even your leadership.

The people who oppose you or your proposals have often given much attention to them and have discovered potential weaknesses that you may not have seen. They are, in that sense, your best advisers, as they're not afraid of offending you by pointing out the flaws in your plans.

Doris Kearns Goodwin, in *Team of Rivals*, writes about the presidential cabinet appointed by Lincoln: Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War; Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury; William H. Seward, Secretary of State; and Edward Bates, Attorney General.

All of these men had either criticized Lincoln, held him in contempt, or run against him for political office. Lincoln might have chosen to distance himself from these men; instead, he chose to pull them close to him and use their points of disagreement to challenge and sharpen his thinking.

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***Leadership Lessons II***

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**MAKE YOUR AUTHORITY A MANTLE THAT YOU PUT ON DAILY**

Leaders must do things that are difficult and unpopular. They make the hard calls and do the unpleasant things that must be done. In their own strength, they might not have the stomach to get the job done quickly and efficiently. So great leaders create a coat (or mantle) of authority to help them when they are in less-than-top form. This mantle can be physical, along the lines of a yellow power tie or camera-friendly dark suit. Makeup people and hairstylists may be involved; having a personal trainer, a wardrobe consultant or a life coach can be tangible “mantles” for some leaders.

For other leaders, the mantle is metaphorical. Paying homage to a personal hero or mentor, reading a spiritual guidebook, or taking a vigorous hike in spectacular nature—these are ways of assuming your mantle. “Putting on your game face” might be another way to say it—but however you want to conceptualize it, don’t forget to put on your mantle of authority every day.



By combining these three leadership lessons with the three lessons from the August 2008 issue of *Leaders to Follow*, you’ve now got a handy toolbox of leadership principles to help you lead effectively, no matter where or whom you lead. Leadership skills can be learned, and usually the learning takes place as you lead and learn from your mistakes.

***The International Leadership Institute***

- Was founded in 1985 in Princeton, NJ
- Remains dedicated to leadership development
- Has run more than 70 educational programs in the US and Europe, for more than 900 participants
- Has partnered with the US Department of State, the University of North Florida, the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce and more than 700 other businesses, universities, religious organizations, private citizens and government agencies

Be looking in the October 2008 issue of *Leaders to Follow*

for details on the “Jewels of the American West”

*Travel-and-Learn program, taking place in May, 2009.*

***The Grand Canyon***

Photo credit <http://www.nps.gov/grca>

