

The One Thing a Leader Needs to Know to Be Unbelievably Successful

In all of the reading and research I've done on highly successful leaders searching for how to develop those successful leadership skills in others, there is one thing that comes up over, and over, and over again.

In *Quiet Leadership*, David Rock touts the Six Steps to Transforming Performance and in the end whittles it down to, "how to have a conversation to resolve any type of dilemma."

In *Leadership Divided*, Ron A. Carucci says that "the leaders producing the most extraordinary results are those that have a set of relationships that are vibrant and engaging."

In *Resonant Leadership*, Boyatzis and McKee refer to the "Cycle of Sacrifice and Renewal" and state that successful leaders must continually renew themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally.

In the *Versatile Leader*, Bob Kaplan says "innovative leaders must make optimum use of their strengths without overdoing it."

In *Leadership Agility*, Joiner & Josephs identify five stages that leaders must move through to develop their agility. The highest level is called the "Synergist" and counts for only 10% of leaders. The synergist is said to have a holistic orientation to life and leadership with an empathic awareness of competing priorities for themselves and their organizations.

Scott Eblin, in his book *The Next Level*, tells us that to be an effective leader one has to be clear about what behaviors sustained past success and realize that those will not be the same behaviors for future victories.

In *Real Leadership*, Dean Williams says that "real leadership demands that the people make adjustments in their values, thinking, and priorities.....at its essence real leadership orchestrates social learning in regard to complex problems and demanding challenges."

In *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes & Posner tell us that great "leadership starts with a relationship and follows a set of five guiding practices."

In *Primal Leadership*, Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee call it Emotional Intelligence, "thinking combined with emotional awareness, promotes both personal and professional success."

Before any of these authors began their quest to find the traits of the successful leader, the ancient Greeks (Socrates being the most famous of them) said, "Know Thyself!" According to

Wikipedia, “know thyself” refers to the ideal of understanding human behavior, morals, and thought because ultimately to understand oneself is to understand other humans as well.

The Center for Creative Leadership (www.ccl.org) has conducted research to find out how emotional intelligence is related to leadership effectiveness. They found that higher levels of self-awareness are associated with increased performance in successful leaders.

If you go back over each of the authors above and look at their main point as I’ve stated it, every single one is a result of “knowing thyself.” The first relationship we need to focus on for success in any area of life is the one with ourselves. Over and over again it comes back to the core promise that if I know myself well enough I can navigate rocky waters in any circumstance. Knowing myself means I know: what I stand for, my belief system, when I need a break, when I need a reality check, when to say no, when to say nothing, what my passion is, what stands in my way, and the list goes on and on. There is not a leadership book out there that will give you these answers; only the you within can speak to knowing thyself. How much more effective could you be if you stopped focusing out there for the truth and began looking inside? Although it is important to get external feedback from time to time, the changes that may be necessary are an inside job.

I encourage you to see the movie “The Bucket List.” It’s a good example of emotional and social intelligence, or the lack thereof, as the case may be. It’s also an excellent reminder that no matter how much money you make (money for some is a measure of success), unless you truly know yourself and find the joy in your life, there will be little happiness in that mountain of dollars.

Call it Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Transformation, Leadership Development, or something else, the bottom line is to “know thyself” is to exemplify a leader. If you start there, those other skills, traits, phases and guiding principles will flow more easily and just add to the excellence within.