

LEADERSHIP Excellence

Warren Bennis



THE MAGAZINE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY

DECEMBER 2010



Daniel Vasella
Leader of the Year

**Avoid
Mojo Killers**

**Lead with
Energy**

**Leadership
Realities
Ten CEO Challenges**

"Leadership Excellence is an exceptional way to learn and then apply the best and latest ideas in the field of leadership."

—WARREN BENNIS, AUTHOR AND
USC PROFESSOR OF MANAGEMENT



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The Oldest Angel/Leader

It seems that this resilient leader has been around forever, serving as a symbol of defiant hope. Day and night, he climbs a well-worn path and holds out his candle. There are stories about him: who is he, why he is here, how he started, when he might retire, and what he'll pass on to the next generation.

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three techniques to ensure that people follow through in the first place: 1) clarify actions and expectations, 2) agree on due dates for deliverables, and 3) establish checkpoints. The acronym ATC can help you:

Action. Clarify actions and expectations (*what good looks like*) and identify who is accountable for which parts of the work. Regardless of how good an idea someone has or how sincere his intentions, nothing happens until someone commits to taking some action to produce a specific deliverable.

Timetable. Establish an agreed-upon due date to ensure everyone is on the same page. Due dates like *as soon as possible* and *by next week* create misunderstandings. Also, commitments that lack a time frame rarely get attention.

Checkpoints. Don't wait to check in until the action or deliverable is due—*set periodic progress checkpoints before the due date* (the frequency of the checkpoints depends on the difficulty of the task and the experience of the person). Agreeing on checkpoints makes follow-up and progress checks a shared activity. The check-ins are now part of project management, and provide chances for you to coach if there is a problem and reinforce behavior when things are going well. And, you don't have to make spontaneous or surprise visits or call when you get nervous.

After-the-Fact: Ask three questions. Sure, prevention is better than an after-the-fact remedy, but people *do* drop the ball. Rather than berate a person for her failure to deliver results, reinforce her accountability to solve the problem.

Asking three questions will encourage the person to think about *how she contributed to the current situation, what she can do to get things back on track, and what she can do to prevent it from happening again.* Present: "What can I do now to get on track?" Future: "What can I do to prevent this problem from happening again?" Past: "What could I have done to prevent the problem?"

Be prepared to deal with defensive behaviors. Try showing empathy: "I know you're as concerned as I am about this, and I realize it's not the way you wanted things to turn out. This conversation is not about assigning blame. It's about solving the problem and ensuring that we keep it from happening again."

Coach people to pose these three questions to themselves as a way to manage their own accountability. **LE**

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ACTION: Hold people accountable for performance.

Legacy Leadership

Learn from Sir Winston Churchill.



by David Parmenter

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL is so iconic that his statute facing the Houses of Parliament simply says *Churchill*. Yet his success came after many calamities that would have floored a mere mortal. Churchill's 12 lessons to leadership are profound and somewhat unique:

Lesson 1: Always believe you have a legacy to leave. We all have a unique mix of attributes, skills and experiences that can be put to use leaving a lasting legacy. The trick is to find it. It is not always obvious. Churchill failed his time at Eaton in style. Only in the army, with time on his hands, did he discover his love of reading; and it was his need to finance his Calvary horses that lead him to earn money as a war correspondent.

Churchill knew he had war in his blood. He was a descendent from the warrior the First Duke of Marlborough, and was, by accident, born at Blenheim Palace (his parents were attending a dance there when his mother went into premature labor). From 1895 to 1900, he sought action in India, the North West frontier, Sudan, South Africa and Cuba. Every time it got quiet he wanted to get in the thick of it elsewhere. He achieved this in collusion with his mother and using all the contacts that the name Churchill granted.

In the early twentieth century, he crossed the floor and joined the opposition in a move he calculated carefully, knowing he'd get nowhere in the Conservative Party. This caused many problems later on, but he achieved his objective—a Ministerial post.

State what your legacy is to be. Forming this legacy in your mind gives meaning to life and helps put up a guiding star in the sky that will shine bright no matter what clouds are over you.

Lesson 2: Have a good hobby so in times of crisis you have a refuse.

Churchill had three major career crises: the calamity of the Dardanelles (WW I), the wilderness years of 1930-1939 where he was consigned to the back-

benches of the opposition, the calamitous defeat at the polls just months after victory day in 1945. Lesser mortals would have consigned their life to depression. Churchill turned to his love of writing, painting and landscaping of his beloved Chartwell property. These hobbies kept him afloat and enabled him to build his resolve to fight again.

Have a passion that absorbs your time, that can be a *safe house* when times are tough? If you do not have one you need to establish one now.

Lesson 3: When you stuff up it is better to 'fall on your sword' as you will surely rise again soon. Churchill was blamed for the botched Gallipoli expedition. He, as *First Lord of the Admiralty*, was dismissed, and he resigned from Parliament to enlist back in the army. He became a *must visit* curiosity in the trenches of Flanders. However, only six months later he was recalled to take up a role in Parliament. By falling on his sword early, Churchill did not waste his energy on a hopeless cause. He gave less ammunition to his enemies in the House of Parliament.

When you have made a mistake, know that it will not define you or your contribution. Know that you will recover to fight another day. With this assurance, take the blame and move on.

Lesson 4: Have a sanctuary where you can escape the maddening crowd. When Churchill first saw Chartwell, he saw its potential. If you were to visit Chartwell, you would

want to swap houses immediately. The setting, ambience, and design all lead to a perfect sanctuary. Churchill once said, "Everyday away from Chartwell is a day wasted." It was in this creative environment that he could dictate his books starting in the afternoons and working long into the night. His wife was given free range to decorate and extend Chartwell to fit the needs of the family. Churchill understood the importance of having a supportive partner, giving her the freedom to pursue her own goals. Lady Churchill was honoured by Britain and Russia, the latter for her efforts as Chairman of the Red Cross Aid to Russia. Having a grand house does not in itself create a sanctuary. The difference is subtle.

Do you feel a day away from your house is a day wasted. If not maybe your sanctuary is yet to be occupied.

Lesson 5: The written word is mightier than the sword. Churchill's first stint



of fame came as a war correspondent. He wrote in a user-friendly style—a blend of fact, autobiography, and descriptive text. He was blunt, and did not hold back from saying what others feared to say. He would be critical of his superiors' handling of the army, their organization, tactics, nothing was sacred. He went where angels feared to tread, and his dispatches became the must read back in London. Time and time again he came back to writing and was awarded the Noble prize for Literature in 1953. While he was not the most knowledgeable historian, he wrote in a style that made history interesting. It was his writing *History of the English speaking peoples* that at last made him financially secure. He was so destitute after losing the premiership that a subscription was established and Chartwell was purchased from the Churchills and then leased to them for the rest of their lives.

Far too many leaders today do not pay enough attention to the power of the written word in helping build their profile. This important point did not escape Obama who wrote his memoirs *Dreams From My Father* four years before he ran for President.

Start making your views, thoughts, and learnings more public.

Lesson 6: Never let a lack of a degree or formal education hold you back.

Churchill was a failure at school. He never went to University. He hated Establishment. He was whipped, but he never succumbed to the mindless mediocrity of learning for the sake of learning. He won his *tertiary spurs* later on in life when university after university gave him honorary degrees. He had, in fact, put himself through his own university. He studied and became an expert in many areas such as Navy, Army, Aviation and History. Whilst tertiary education is a valuable asset never let it hold you back. If you succeed in life you will end up getting an honorary doctorate in any case.

Lesson 7: Learn to be a great orator.

Churchill is remembered most for his great speeches. These were very carefully constructed in his great study at Chartwell. He would rehearse the words until he was sure *they danced*—that they sent a clear message to *the common man*. He used words that a 14-year-old youth would understand.

His delivery was legendary; slow, deliberate and repetitive. He was an actor delivering a performance to his audience the people of Britain, the Commonwealth, and importantly the Americans. Leaders need to realise

that being a good orator is a vital part of leadership. Time and effort needs to be devoted to delivering a meaningful message. Special coaching and endless practice should be seen as an important investment rather than a chore.

Lesson 8: Manage PR. Churchill never missed a chance to present his ideas in the best light. The pictures of him with his 'V' for victory sign, or him holding a Tommy gun in his business suit standing over rubble are iconic. His war time speeches, so carefully prepared, would be a *must listen to* by all with a radio. While the press had often written ruinous headings about Churchill during his fall from grace, he worked closely with them to promote the image of the bull dog who would never surrender. His use of media is unparalleled. With the media that now exists, we can only speculate the dramatic use he could have made of it.

Start befriending the press, issue them useful copy, be available for comment, be not afraid to speak out on issues you feel passionate about. Find yourself a leader who has managed PR well and use their experience.



Lesson 9: Personal contact with key decision makers is vital. When you walk through Chartwell, Blenheim Place or his war rooms in Westminster, you are struck by the personal letters he wrote. These were not correspondence dictated to his secretaries but hand-written letters. Churchill knew who the important decision-makers were and maintained regular contact. He devoted as much time writing to President Roosevelt as drafting major speeches to Parliament. Churchill's correspondence bypassed the cabinet and helped forge the alliance with the United States.

Who are you in regular contact with? Take the time this week to dust off some contacts you have with decision makers.

Lesson 10: See and own the future. Like all great leaders Churchill spent a lot of time thinking about what the future had in store. He was the first to see the rise of Hitler as a major menace. He understood the importance of a united Europe to prevent a further war. Churchill supported a practical

rebuilding of Germany thus avoiding the harsh retribution levied against Germany following World War One. He saw the need to end the 'Cold War' as the atomic bomb made any form of warfare impossible between the super powers. The key was that Churchill created an environment where he could think deeply, uninterrupted about what is going to happen next. He tried, as much as possible, to own the future.

Have you planned your working week to allow for some 'blue ocean' time? How about a Friday morning where you stay at your home office until lunchtime, where you spend time making all the strategic calls, finishing off the strategic reports and thinking about the future. Once you start doing this you will find it addictive.

Lesson 11: Stay close to scientists / technology advancements. Churchill had high regard for scientists and engineers and gave them free license to create new methods of warfare. They came up with many inventions, including the floating Mulberry harbors (key to the Normandy offensive), the bouncing bomb, and modifications to the spitfire Merlin engine enabling the plane to keep up with the V1 flying bombs.

He was conversant with technology, he understood it and he was able to communicate with 'techos' and move them to greater heights. How close are you to the creative techs in your organisation? If not how about taking one or two out for a great coffee.

Lesson 12: Understand your body rhythms and work patterns. Churchill worked late and rose late. He was not a morning person. He knew what made him efficient and kept to that regime, never allowing events to disorganize him. Even during the war, he was only woken if the matter was urgent. While working to 2 a.m. and rising for breakfast at 11 a.m. may not be your style, you need to develop one and keep to it, fighting off the need to conform to organizational requirements.

Churchill was a flawed leader on a number of counts. He was reckless with his life and with those he was in charge of. Yet through the many leadership traits he did have he left a legacy that will be remembered for all time.

While we can't all leave such a legacy, we can, and should, leave a legacy that says we changed people lives for the better. Sir Winston Churchill shows us a way—if we choose to learn. LE

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ACTION: Apply one lesson learned from Churchill.