

Four Behaviors of Safe Leaders - The L.E.A.D. Model [Guide]



This guide discusses the behaviors necessary for successful safety leadership, and what it takes to truly change an organization.

Throughout history and popular culture there are various stories and examples about behaviors related to safety leadership. How George Washington and William Wallace, in the movie Braveheart, each had a strong vision for the future that truly inspired and motivated people to action. Sir Richard Branson gave us an example of how successful leaders really embrace change and help people to see its benefits. For the sports historians, we couldn't help but remember legendary coaches like John Wooden and Vince Lombardi, whose personal touch and teaching skills made them amongst the greatest of all coaches in professional sports.

If we break down each of these examples, it gives us a useful way to share what we call the "L.E.A.D. Model" of safety leadership. This model is based on research of the many behaviors that are necessary for successful safety leadership, and what it takes to truly change an organization's safety culture.

The 4 key behaviors of the L.E.A.D. Model:

LAYS OUT A VISION

When was the last time you sat in on a safety briefing or toolbox talk that was exciting and actually moved you? It's a rare thing. But successful safety leaders give their people a compelling and motivating vision for safety, and why they care about it. This recipe has 2 key ingredients:

- A. **Be crystal clear** – it must be very clear to everyone what the leader is asking for
- B. **Make it personal** – the leader shares a reason for why safety is really personal to them

ACTS AS A COACH

What do teams with a great safety culture often have in common? Their leader is more of a coach than a sergeant or a buddy. So how do you act like a coach when it comes to safety? You:

- A. **Actively listen** – by listening to employees and asking questions before you correct an unsafe behavior, you completely change the paradigm, and you show them that you value and respect them as a person.
- B. **Give timely and constructive feedback** – knowing how to give effective feedback is absolutely essential for a great safety leader. It should be balanced (start with the positive, then discuss where they can improve; constructive rather than negative; and should be given as soon after the behavior as possible).
- C. **Keep it positive** – People respond best to positive interactions and positive reinforcement. Always try to keep your interaction positive, professional and respectful.

EMBRACES CHANGE

As we all know, change is constant these days. When there are changes that impact safety policies or procedures, strong safety leaders can convince their people of the benefits and roll them out successfully, even when there is initial push back. How do they do this? Here are a couple tips:

- A. **Involve others** – leaders can get buy-in from their people by involving them in the process, getting input from them and being open to new ideas on how to implement changes
- B. **Drive the change** – get on top of the change! Why wait for questions and confusion to begin, when you can proactively communicate things immediately from the start?

DEMONSTRATES CREDIBILITY

Good luck leading a team successfully if you have no credibility in their eyes! At the end of the day, people must have respect for their leaders, and know that they have integrity. When it comes to safety, this is even more critical. Safety leaders must:

- A. **Walk the talk** – if you want people to wear their PPE on the shop floor – guess what? You'd better be wearing it too! Good safety leaders must always role model safe behavior.
- B. **Everyone's accountable, starting with the leader** – supervisors must feel a personal sense of accountability for the safety of their people. So while everyone is accountable for safety, it must start with the leader.
- C. **Be organized** – in order to lead safety initiatives with credibility, leaders must be organized and planful. When people recognize that you know what's going on, it builds trust and credibility.

Understand, though, that these types of behaviors do *not* come easily to some leaders. Personality traits, leadership style and experiences dramatically influence a person's ability to display these behaviors. But by learning about one's SafetyDNA™ profile and leadership traits through validated psychological assessments, and receiving personalized coaching, all leaders can gain insight into their tendencies and blind spots, and learn to apply these behaviors. And as we have seen time and time again, once leaders understand and apply the simple behaviors in the L.E.A.D. Model, **they can immediately begin reducing the exposure of their people and improving safety on their teams.**