



MODEL THE WAY

Some people make things happen, some watch things happen, while others wonder what has happened. – Gaelic proverb

1. Clarifying values by finding your voice and affirming shared ideals.

The leaders who are admired most are those who believe strongly in something and are willing to stand up for their beliefs.

Exemplary leaders know that if they want to gain commitment and reach the highest standards, they must model the behavior they expect of others. To do what you say, you have to know what you want to say. To earn and sustain credibility, you must be able to clearly articulate deeply held beliefs.

The very first step on the journey to credible leadership involves **clarifying your values**—discovering those fundamental beliefs that will guide your decisions and actions along the path to success and significance. Values set boundaries for your decisions and they serve as guides to your actions.

- Figure out for yourself, and within yourself, what you think is important. Fully examine the values and assumptions that drive you.
- Choose the principles you'll use to guide your actions, and become clear about the message you want to deliver.
- Clearly and distinctly give voice to these values by communicating your beliefs in ways that uniquely represent who you are; in other words, **be authentic**.
- Champion strong beliefs about matters of principle, unwavering commitment to a clear set of values, and passion for causes.

You can be authentic only when you lead to the principles that matter most to you. Otherwise you're just putting on an act. You will not have the integrity to lead.

Student leaders are supposed to stand up for their beliefs, so they'd better have some beliefs to stand up for. But it's not just the leader's values that are important. Leaders speak and act on behalf of a larger community. Leaders must be clear about their own personal values as well as build agreement around **common principles and common ideals**. These are the **shared values** that everyone will commit to upholding.

2. Set the example by aligning actions and shared values.

Leaders **practice what they preach**—they are serious about their duty to represent their values and standards to the rest of the world, and to live up to them to the best of their abilities. Leaders who are seen as practicing what they preach are more effective than those leaders who don't.

Leaders can never take their credibility for granted. Credibility is the foundation of leadership. If people don't believe in the messenger, they won't believe in the message.

Demonstrate your intense commitment to the values you espouse by setting an example. It's how you earn and sustain credibility over time.

- Set the example through daily actions demonstrating you are deeply committed to your beliefs.
- Earn the right and respect to lead through direct involvement and interaction. It's all about execution and action.
- Distinguish yourself through relentless effort, steadfastness, competence, and attention to detail.

Again, deeds are far more important than words when others want to determine how serious you are about what you say. **Words and deeds must be consistent.**

It's not just what leaders do that matters too. Leaders are also measured by how consistent their constituents' actions are with shared values, so leaders must teach others how to set an example.

- You must **become a role model** for what the whole group supports.
- Create a climate that makes it possible for everyone to align themselves with shared values.

Leading by example is the most effective way to get needed objectives accomplished. **Examples are contagious.**

Conclusion

Leaders have to earn respect everyday by staying true to their values and by acting on their beliefs. Leading by example is how leaders make visions and values tangible—how you demonstrate that you are personally committed. And because you're leading a group of people—not just leading yourself—modeling the way is also about what those who are following you are doing. How consistent are their words and deeds? How well are they practicing what's preached? As the leader, you're held accountable for their actions too.