

WHEN SHOULD A  
LEADER MOVE ON

HOW TO BECOME A BETTER  
LEADER IN 2017

HOW TO LEAD  
THROUGH BAD TIMES

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Mark Wager is an experienced Leadership Coach with nearly thirty years experience of developing leaders across a range of industries and countries.

Mark is accredited in the MBTI suite of tools and is a professional member of NZAPT (New Zealand Association of Psychological Type) NZIM (New Zealand Institute of Management) and NZATD (New Zealand Association of Training & Development).

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# How To Become A Better Leader In 2017

The New Year has started and with it comes your goals for the year. Businesses demand a lot from their leaders and with every year you are expected to do more with less. As expectations grow the resources required to meet those expectations reduce, so it's more vital than ever before for leaders to become better.

Every leader is different, with different strengths and weaknesses and different opportunities to develop into a better leader but there are several things that every leader can do regardless of your experience level to become the type of leader that inspires and motivates your team.

## Find a Mentor

A Mentor is an experienced professional and trusted advisor who guides less experienced leaders through their career. Having someone who you can meet on a monthly basis for an hour or so in order to discuss how to overcome the challenges facing you can be a valuable resource. When it works well you can have confidential discussions with someone who has faced similar situations.

There are professional mentors out there but in my experience I've found the best mentors don't cost you anything. The best mentors are anyone who has had experience in the same industry that you are in and most importantly they are someone you can trust, not only to keep your conversations confidential but also you trust them enough to give you honest feedback.

## Become a Mentor

You can learn a lot from meeting with a Mentor but you can also learn more from being a Mentor yourself. If you as a leader is serious about becoming better then you need to consider giving up a few hours a month to help guide a less experienced leader through the obstacles that you yourself have already overcome. When you become a Mentor not only do you get the gratification of seeing others develop but you experience opportunities for insightful problem solving in a detached environment because you are not at the centre of the leadership issues and problem solving discussion. This helps you to become a better leader and creates further unique opportunities that utilises your own leadership style which in turn establishes respect and recognition that a good leader deserves. Personal development and growth is the natural outcome of true leadership.

## Read more articles

With the advances in technology over the past few years it is easier now than ever before to find and access information. Today by

opening a newspaper or going onto the Internet you can learn lessons from the best leadership experts in the world. Not every article will contain advice that is relevant to your particular situation but with the scale of information that is available you will find the answers that you seek. The best leaders are constantly looking for ways to improve and understand and there are many similarities between the successful leaders regardless of their industry so don't narrow your search to leaders within your industry, look for anyone who has achieved success.

## Challenge your assumptions

Every leader has a certain level of bias when dealing with different people. For the majority of leaders this bias is very slight and many of you will be unaware that it exists but it does exist. Everyone including leaders makes assumptions on the intentions behind people's actions and this is natural because we assume everyone thinks the same way that we do so we use our own way of thinking which has been developed over years of experiences to create a filter which we use to interpret the intentions of other people. It's natural but it's wrong. In my role as a Leadership Coach I often get called into teams to solve issues between people and I can tell you that in over 90% of circumstances the issues are a direct result of misunderstandings caused by people making assumptions. To become a better leader take time out to ask yourself if your assumptions of people are correct.

## Take on new challenges

Comfort is the enemy of development. If you are comfortable in your role then you are not getting better. This year

take on new challenges and embrace opportunities to achieve something that you have never done before, whether it's talking in public, dealing with that performance issue that you've been avoiding or stretching for that promotion that you believe is out of your reach. Whatever it may be, push yourself even if it scares you. Remember fear only exists when the outcome is unknown and it's only unknown because you haven't done it yet. The fear is always far less after you've taken on the challenge. Embrace the discomfort of a new challenge because in that moment of discomfort you will find opportunities to become a better leader and a better person.

There will be many challenges waiting for you this year and many of them won't be currently apparent but if you become a better leader then you will be better equipped to meet these challenges and overcome them. All leaders are different but there are similarities in the skills you need to succeed and as a result there are some common things that all leaders can do to become a better leader in 2017.

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# When Should A Leader Move On?



Last month, New Zealand was reacting to the shocking news that their Prime Minister John Key had decided to resign. In politics you usually only see a leader resign when they have been caught in a scandal and even then a resignation is becoming more and more rare yet in this case John Key has decided to walk away from his leadership role while his party is polling at 50% of the popular vote, the economy is doing well in New Zealand and he stood a good chance of winning the next election.

In his resignation speech the Prime Minister said that he felt that many leaders stay on too long and in this way have an opportunity to go out on top. John Key attributed family reasons for leaving, saying that the leadership role as Prime Minister had come at quite some sacrifice for the people who are dearest to him, his family, and he had given the role all he had and has nothing left in the tank.

This got me thinking, when is the right time for a leader to move on?

To answer this question, you first need to understand what leadership is at its fundamental core. Leadership is the ability to install power and belief in people in order for them to reach levels that they never imagined possible. Leadership is power and leadership is most effective when that power is transferred, from the leader to the followers thus making them the new leader and making the former leader's role redundant.

The best leaders understand that moving on is a natural part of a leader's journey. The best leaders create a legacy that lasts long after they leave so for them it's never a question of whether they should leave but more when is the right time to leave. So here are a few suggestions.

### When the passion is gone

"A great leader's courage to fulfil his vision comes from passion, not position" - John Maxwell

Leadership requires full commitment from the leader because whatever behaviours the leader demonstrates on a daily basis are replicated by the team. Studies have shown that it's difficult for employees to be consistently more motivated than their boss, so if the leader loses his passion, then at some stage the team will lose theirs. There are many roles that a leader can continue in when they've stopped caring, but being a leader is not one of them.

### When the leader is holding others back

"The function of leadership is to produce more leaders not more followers" - Ralph Nader

A true leader is defined by his legacy and a leader's legacy can be measured by the number of new leaders he produces. For a leader to develop they need mentoring along with a mixture of support and guidance but there comes a time when the only way for the future leader to develop any further is by becoming the leader. At that point either the future or the current leader needs to move on.

### When the job is complete

"Things do not happen. Things are made to happen" - John F Kennedy

Every effective leader has a clear definition of what success looks like and a vision as to how to make success a reality. Once that happens the leader needs to establish a new vision otherwise the team and the leader soon loses direction. This happens regularly in sport when a team achieves their goal they find it incredibly difficult to maintain that level of performance. If a new vision can't be created that inspires the team and more importantly the leader then it's time to consider moving on.

### When there's nothing left to give

"The whole point of being alive is to evolve into the complete person you were intended to be" - Oprah Winfrey

The most successful teams I have ever had the honour of working alongside all have one thing in common and that is the ability to evolve. As teams progress the challenges facing them changes which means the skills required to meet these challenges change as well. What worked well one year doesn't necessarily work in subsequent years and the needs to evolve applies to the leader as well. Regular clients of mine are leaders who are trying to evolve their skills to meet new challenges because teams

of different sizes require different leadership skills. Leaders need to evolve otherwise they have nothing left to give and the progress of the team stalls.

In my experience the only person that truly knows when it's the right time for the leader to move on is the leader themselves. It's a difficult time for the leader and may well be the most difficult decision they ever have to make but it's a decision that they have to make. True leaders know that the biggest mistake they can make is to stay too long in a role because if they do the leader can end up hindering the team rather than taking it forward and when that happens the leader is no longer leading.

"Quitting is leading to " - Neilson Mandela.

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# How To Lead Through Bad Times

More than any other time when things are bad we turn to our leaders. A workplace can be stressful in normal circumstances but when obstacles seem to be too big for the team to overcome and the future is uncertain stress levels rise and this impacts the productivity of the team. It could be a change process, a downturn in sales or a sudden departure of key staff.

Whatever the reason, when we are uncertain we need direction and we seek that direction from our leaders. While these times of high pressure can be difficult for staff they can be even more challenging for our leaders who have to provide the much needed direction, so how can a leader effectively lead during bad times?

**Good leaders control how they feel.**

The key to understanding how to lead in bad times is to understand human

behaviour both from the individual and team perspective. The first step for the leader is the realisation that they are in complete control of how they feel. The situation around them will certainly influence them but it's them and no one else who determines how they react to a situation. A stressful situation is only stressful if allowed to be stressed. Situations could instead be seen on as a wonderful opportunity, to create a mindset which is more likely to get the desired result.

**Remember the ABC of leadership**

When people are worried they need certainty a reassurance that there's a plan and belief that the plan will work both of these require the leader to remember their ABC.

The ABC of leadership stands for Always Be Confident. If you are doubts as a leader that's fine and it's even natural but you can't show those doubts to your team, they want you to be confident so that's what you need to be remember that in times of stress everyone's instinct are heightened so every concern or doubt is magnified so as a leader you need to show absolute confidence in the future and if you are not confident then fake it until you make it.

### Never play the blame game.

The common mistake that happens during bad times is when people get caught up in an endless debate of who's to blame, who's fault it is for the situation that they are in. When this happens, there is no progress and teams will never move forward. I've had the honour to lead on several occasions and I've always made it clear that if any mistake occurs, I never under any circumstances want to hear people talk about who's to blame. All I want to hear about is solutions, and after the problem is fixed and things are back to business as usual it's time to review what went wrong, who did what and what we need to do to avoid mistakes in the future but in the moment when a mistake has been made, the team

needs to focus on the present because the solution needed today doesn't exist in the past.

### Communicate, communicate, communicate

People are instinctively designed to fear the unknown so as part of our self defence mechanism our brain does what it can to eliminate the unknown even if they have to make something up to do so. In the workplace during the bad times this means that if there are gaps in information people will fill that information gap with rumours or assumptions both of which can be very damaging to the long term prospects for the team. The leaders need to supply as much information as possible during this time as long as it doesn't take time away from fixing the issue. Remember if there are questions unanswered people are more likely to imagine a bad outcome rather than a good outcome so answer as many questions as possible and don't be afraid to tell people you don't know as long as you can tell people when you will know.

## Have an action plan

To go from where you are today to where you want to be in the future you need an action plan to bridge the gap between the two. There are many different types of action plans but all the successful ones contain the same basic components. They answer the what, how, when and who. Each action point has details of what is going to be achieved, how it's going to be achieved, when it's going to be done by and who is ultimately responsible for making sure it will happen. The last or is often overlooked but bad times require people to stand up and take responsibility and be willing to be held accountable for their actions.

## Good times exist because of the bad times

The last thing for every leader to remember is that there is good within every bad. If your team is struggling through a change process or through a period of poor sales you need to find the lessons that exist within every failure because times change and when times are better the lessons you learnt during the bad times will make the good times last longer.

### Develop A Wining Mindset: 1 Day Workshop

Regus, Auckland

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### How To Create & Lead A Highly Effective Team

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Meetings on the Terrace, Wellington

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### How To Create & Lead A Highly Effective Team

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Thu 23 Feb at 10:00am – 4:00pm

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### Dealing With Poor Performance: A Leadership Workshop

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**Mark Wager** is an experienced Leadership Coach who utilises his knowledge of leadership psychology to show teams and individuals how to fulfil their potential. It was when Mark applied these strategies and techniques in his personal life that he developed the mental skills to achieve his goals. In a year he lost 30 kgs (66 lbs) in weight and started his own successful business. As a result Mark now spends time as a Mind Coach sharing his knowledge of how people can unlock the motivation, confidence and focus that success demands regardless of the nature of their goal.

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