Leading Yourself

1. In today’s workplace, supervisors may not have the time to devote to the proper development of all their employees. In this case, it is up to the individual to learn when and how to lead themselves.

2. Understanding the current leadership situation at work is key to establishing a plan for individuals to lead themselves. Many supervisors may fall into one of these three categories:
   a. Good supervisors give constructive feedback, and direction. They allow for employees to take initiative and lead themselves.
   b. Not so good supervisors fail to provide consistent feedback, nor do they show interest in the development of their employees.
   c. Overwhelmed supervisors, the most common type, have good intentions but they do not have the time to provide as much guidance and feedback as they would like.

3. Individuals can begin a self-leadership strategy by identifying the best opportunities for themselves while considering these questions:
   a. What does the supervisor or organization need? What contributions can be made?
   b. What is happening in the respective industry or area? What are the trends?
   c. What past personal successes can be useful now? What work is most enjoyable?

4. There are three main types of internal motivation that drive most people. It is important for individuals to understand what motivates them.
   a. Sense of autonomy – an individual’s need to be in control of their life and work.
   b. Mastery – an individual’s need to continuously improve and be good at something.
   c. Purpose – the feeling an individual has that their work matters and makes a difference.

5. When dealing with difficult times, use these tips and strategies to discern a path forward:
   a. Focus on the end game – think about customers, colleagues, and others dependent on the individual and the organization.
   b. Learn from small wins and celebrate them.
   c. Don’t go at it alone, look to others for support, guidance, and encouragement.

6. As a leader, it’s important to know the difference between accomplishing a task and setting a strategic goal.
   a. Strategic goals are bigger, more complex, and require creativity.
   b. Tasks are short-term.
   c. Balancing both strategic goals and accomplishing tasks is the key to being a good leader.

7. Strategic thinking involves looking to the future and deciding on where to focus. When individuals set strategic goals for themselves, they should focus on two things:
   a. Impact – How does the goal accomplish personal, department, and organizational objectives? How will the goal itself, as well as accomplishing the goal, impact others?
   b. Engagement – Think about why the goal matters. To the individual? Others? Personal connection to the goal will help with motivation to accomplish it.

8. When creating a personal development plan, remember three keys to gain leader support:
   a. Be specific – lay out the content and actions that lead to the goal to be accomplished.
   b. Demonstrate value – what kind of return on investment (ROI) should leadership expect.
   c. Show emotion – exhibit excitement and energy about the opportunity.
9. Leading self requires self-awareness, commitment and motivation. It also requires support. Look for support in these areas:
   a. Supervisor – know what type of feedback is empowering and ask for it from direct supervisors or mentors.
   b. Colleagues and mentors – share strategies and challenges for leading self, gain support and encouragement, as well as an outside perspective.
   c. Online – online groups can be a good place to share challenges, learn from others experiences, and get support from role-specific or industry-specific groups.

10. Keep these points in mind when doing a self-assessment:
   a. Assess feelings (self-motivation, relationships with others) and think about improvement in any specific areas.
   b. Look to past success – What skills or abilities contributed to past successes? Leverage these strengths in the future.
   c. Personal growth – take stock of new skills learned or areas of improvement made. Can they be applied to other areas of work?
   d. Stay objective – don’t be too kind or too critical.

11. Self-recognition is an important aspect of staying motivated. Use these tips when deciding how to reward personal accomplishments:
   a. Write it down – keep a list of proud achievements and obstacles that were overcome.
   b. Talk to the people affected by the result and find out how it helped them.
   c. Brag to a friend or family member, someone that will provide support and encouragement and understand the effort.
   d. Treat yourself, within reason – self-care is important.
   e. Frame up the win in terms of positive impact and share it with the supervisor.

12. Learning how to deal with failure and learning from mistakes is key for high achieving people.
   a. It’s okay to be temporarily upset.
   b. Think realistically about the impact of the failure.
   c. Remember past success.
   d. Is it fixable? If so, then develop a plan to fix it.
   e. If it’s not fixable, start accepting it and figure out how to tell the supervisor.
      i. Explain what they need to know.
      ii. Own it.
      iii. End positively and do not get defensive.
   f. Figure out what went wrong, learn from it and don’t repeat it.

13. Keeping the supervisor engaged without undermining their authority is important when leading self.

14. Use these tips to help leverage relationships with peers for greater success:
   a. Fellow high performers – view peers as colleagues, form relationships and engage with them.
   b. Middle performers – find ways to help them and teach them.
   c. Low performers – avoid people with negative attitudes.
15. Leading by example can demonstrate to others how to incorporate positive changes into the workplace.
   a. Start small – share smaller concepts about leading self and work up from there.
   b. Provide simple suggestions that the team can build on later.
   c. Offer to help others on their leadership development journey.
   d. Leading by example helps to build accountability and trust at all levels.

16. Be understanding and aware of organizational hierarchy when leading self. Keep in mind the following:
   a. Don’t be self-absorbed only – keep others in mind and ask how they motivate and lead themselves, which will provide learning opportunities.
   b. Never throw a supervisor under the bus – talking negatively about someone doesn’t reflect well on the person making the comments.
   c. Be open and inviting, and don’t look down on others.

17. Here are three final keys to remember:
   a. Individuals can only control their own behavior.
   b. Leading self involves moving from reactionary thinking to strategic thinking, and working on developing a long-term vision.
   c. Leading self is the path to true maturity. Learn to embrace and demonstrate self-motivation and self-reward, as well as to develop a sense of resilience.