

## Becoming a Smarter Leader

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One of the traits that often come to mind when people describe leaders is intellect. A leader is expected to be smart. But being smart shouldn't be a static condition – there are always opportunities to expand your knowledge base. Here are a few ideas of ways to not only become smarter, but to become a more effective leader at the same time.

**Challenge yourself to learn.** Pick a topic that you want to know better (or you feel like you should know better) and then offer to give a presentation, lead a class, or teach a colleague about that topic. The pressure of knowing that you need to share this information will help you learn it thoroughly (as well as improve your ability to retain this knowledge).

**Occasionally veer from business topics.** While it's important to stay abreast of the latest industry trends, it's also important to open your mind to other ideas. In particular, reading non-business-related selections cannot only provide some much needed downtime, but can also stimulate your thinking in new ways. This new way of thinking might surprisingly translate into an ability to look at work-related challenges in a new light as well. And at minimum, your latest reading time could become your new small-talk-topic at the next networking event.

**Learn something new.** Again, this doesn't have to be business-related, but learning something new – like speaking a new language or playing a musical instrument – can actually exercise your mind in a way that makes you smarter, not to mention makes you a more interesting individual. This new skill can also provide a point from which you might find understanding with someone with whom you otherwise share very little common ground.

**Sleep.** There's been a lot of talk lately about how sleep is not only a good idea, but is vital toward maintaining a healthy lifestyle. In addition, sleep allows your brain to process all that it has learned throughout the day, and to reboot during that time so that it starts the next day ready to absorb new information. In addition, although scientists still don't understand the process, they do know that neural connections, critical to memory, are formed when we sleep. Prioritizing these strategies throughout your life will not only make you a smarter leader, but may make you a better leader as well.

### About the Author

Marie Peeler is the principal of Peeler Associates, a Pembroke, Mass.-based organization that helps leaders enhance their leadership effectiveness, focus on what's most important, and achieve their goals. Believing that growth is vital in maintaining and increasing leadership effectiveness – growth of individual leaders, growth of leadership teams, and growth of organizations – Marie helps leaders grow through executive coaching, team building, organizational development, leadership training, business retreats, and keynote speaking. For more information, please visit [www.peelerassociates.com](http://www.peelerassociates.com) [<http://www.peelerassociates.com>]

