

For Greater LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

Grow Your Capacity to Lead



As the mailing industry continues to face uncertainty from rate increases, competition from alternative media, and the complications of ever changing automation requirements, being a leader in the space doesn't get easier. In an attempt to survive, leaders get tough and get lean, focusing precious resources on executing winning marketing strategies and developing new opportunities, while trimming operating costs.

In an effort to control the seemingly uncontrollable, leaders can become myopic in their attempts to manage their environment. They try to work harder and to do more. They become dogged in their determination to ensure that each person they are responsible for is doing the right thing in the right way. They do their very best to always have the answers and they run a very tight ship.

It sounds good but it can feel downright exhausting. It also isn't necessarily the most effective strategy for a leader.

Leaders do themselves and their organizations a disservice by not tending to their own growth and development as leaders and agents of change. Similarly, it's tempting for leaders who are focused on just keeping the ship afloat, to not pay adequate attention to developing organizational cultures that can weather and thrive in the chaos we face.

Leaders need to stop and take a more holistic view, one that accounts not only for projects and day-to-day tactics, but their impact on the culture of the organization and their own capacity to lead.

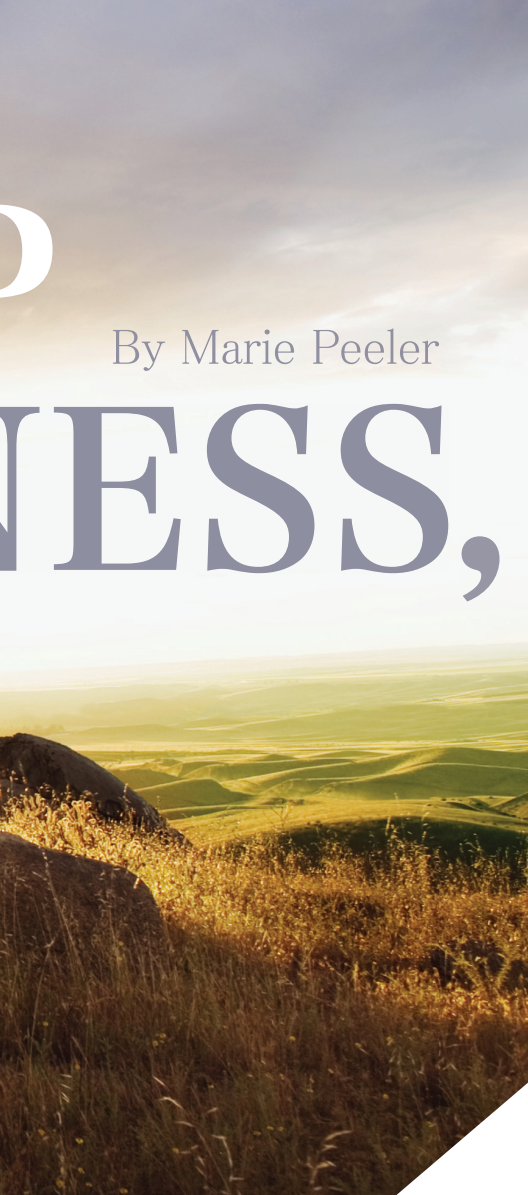
Develop Your Capacity to Lead

When a leader stops growing, the leader's organization similarly becomes stagnant. A leader I once knew told me that he was

finished growing — that he wasn't looking for a promotion and he knew all that he needed to in order to effectively lead his organization. He said this as I watched him bumble through interpersonal challenges that made his already tough job much more difficult than it needed to be.

Stretching your capacity to lead is important to anyone seeking to move up the career ladder, but even if you are not looking for a promotion, it's critical to stay in development as a leader. Developing your leadership capacity increases your resilience, better equips you to handle increasing complexity and helps avoid the burnout that comes with constantly trying to slay dragons with the same tired weapons.

Developing leadership capacity means developing leadership competencies, skills, and something else that is maddeningly intangible but even more critical to



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LEADERSHIP, BUSINESS,

leaders who aspire to influence the culture of the organization.

Being Versus Doing

Developing one's capacity to lead is as much about learning to master the being of leadership as it is about mastering the doing. If doing is the tasks and behaviors that one executes (what a person *does*) then being is the character, beliefs, and attitudes (who a person *is*) that one brings to leadership. Successful being drives successful doing. Working on both being and doing is the discipline of personal mastery that successful leaders develop to allow them to move from being reactive managers to being influential, proactive, productive, creative leaders, that are highly effective.

Highly effective leaders are both task- and people-oriented. They learn to speak boldly and courageously, as well as com-

passionately to deliver the critical messages that the organization needs to hear. They are decisive and action-oriented; they cultivate an understanding of the complete organizational system that helps guide their decision making. They are credible and trusted and, therefore, influential. They are visionary and are skilled in communicating their vision. They are collaborators and mentors; they genuinely care about people and relationships, as well as goals and results. They are composed and they live in balance. They are self-aware, accept their strengths and weakness, and are committed to learning.

The Developmental Journey

The journey of developing one's own capacity to lead — that is, both the being and the doing of leadership — is an intentional journey. The leader must choose it and decide to develop as both a leader and a person. Fortunately, there are a number of tools and supports available.

1. Feedback is an important developmental tool.

One can obtain feedback using an informal approach of simply asking questions (to learn how, see www.peelerassociates.com/blog/seven-questions-to-get-the-feedback-you-need) or utilizing a formal 360-degree feedback survey instrument. Although many leaders don't receive feedback well, learning to process feedback constructively is one of the most powerful things that a leader can do for her or his self-development.

2. Leaders can work with a coach,

who will use many tools including acute listening, power questioning and constructive feedback to partner with the leader to achieve specific objectives. Coaches will often do assessments that help increase the leaders self-awareness and self-understanding. Mentors and role models, who are themselves strong in the leadership competencies that the leader wants to develop, can also be invaluable.

3. Leaders can avail themselves of formal learning opportunities

such as classes on management and leadership. When I first came into the mailing industry as the General Manager of a newspaper owned lettershop, I studied up on the DMM to learn industry regulations but I also signed up for a management course at the

local community college, despite being a college graduate. The academic learning was great but the interaction with peers facing similar leadership challenges was even more valuable.

4. When is the last time you read a good book?

Not the latest James Patterson thriller, but something for your own learning and development? For a handful of great books, check out some favorites — all of which are relatively quick reads — at www.PeelerAssociates.com/resources. Or simply get started by reading *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, a perennial favorite from Stephen R. Covey.

5. Cultivate a connection with others.

When you cultivate connection, you show others that they matter. This can not only pay enormous dividends to your organizational culture, but can also allow you to tap into your best resources to learn more about yourself and your operation. For specific tips on how to do this, see *Tapping Your Best Resources to Improve Your Operation* in the February 2014 e-newsletter by scanning the QR code below.

As you grow and develop as a leader, your ability to influence the culture of your mailing operation will also grow. And you will be better able to create a culture that can not only weather, but thrive in the chaos that impacts the mailing industry. More important, developing your own capacity to lead can make the difference between daily drudgery and a fulfilling leadership endeavor.

Marie Peeler is a principal of Peeler Associates, a Pembroke, Mass.-based organization that helps leaders clarify objectives, find engagement, improve interpersonal effectiveness, and attain their goals through services that include executive coaching, team development, leadership workshops, leadership assessment, business retreats, and conference and meeting presentations. Learn more about Marie or Peeler Associates at www.PeelerAssociates.com or read more of her thoughts on leadership at her blog, Leadership Perspectives at www.PeelerAssociates.com/blog.



Read Marie's article from the February newsletter!