



## Taking Charge

### Part II:

MISSION (part 2): Define and communicate your expectations.

#### WHAT YOU SHOULD SAY OR DO:

After you've defined your expectations, determine how you will communicate them to the people you lead. Here are some do's and do not's:

#### **DO:**

- √ List your expectations in writing. Keep it to one page! Use the document as a handout.
- √ Meet with everyone you lead.
- √ Meet with them at the same time so that they can all hear it the same way.
- √ Don't use the meeting for any other purposes, only to communicate expectations.
- √ Allow for questions.
- √ Ask them for possible examples of your expectations for themselves and add them to the "what it looks like" portion of the listing.
- √ Post your expectations in your office or workspace

#### **DO NOT:**

- √ Do not simply hand out a listing of the expectations. They will throw it in the trash.
- √ Meet individually with the people you lead.
- √ Meet with them telephonically. If you must meet telephonically, email or fax the expectations to them before you meet.
- √ Assume they get it the first time. Make your expectations a part of your future discussions on a weekly basis.

“I want to take this time to meet with everyone, just to let you know what my expectations are. This is important because I believe that if you know what’s important to me, it can eliminate some confusion and guesswork on your part. I want to read these to you and explain what they mean to me by giving a few examples. I have a handout for each of you (pass handouts to everyone). My purpose isn’t to tell you how to do your jobs. My purpose is to let you know what kinds of things are important to me and by letting you know, I think we can avoid some difficulties in the future. After I’m finished I’d like to get your reactions.”

#### WHY IT WILL WORK:

People need to know what is expected of them, otherwise they become confused. Leaders get paid to minimize or eliminate confusion. They may know what their job description says but unless you tell them what’s important to you and what it looks like to you, they have little choice but to guess. Leaders are in the business of telling people how to act and by communicating expectations early they can prevent problems and disappointment in the future.

MISSION: Know your people.

#### WHAT YOU SHOULD SAY OR DO:

Meet with each person you lead individually. Make an appointment with them to meet for 30 minutes to an hour. Take notes during your discussion. You can use the following form to record the meeting (Table 7):

Questions to open the discussion:

*Tell me about yourself.*

*Education?*

*Training?*

*Where do you live?*

*Hobbies? What do you do for fun?*

Questions to learn about his/her strengths:

*Tell me what you do best at work.*

*Tell me what you like most about your job.*

*Give me a work-related example of when you were at your best recently.*

*Give me another example.*

Questions to learn about what is important to him/her:

*What’s important to you?*



**WHY IT WILL WORK:**

Leaders must know their people, there is no substitute. What are their strengths, what do they do well? What are their weaknesses, what do they not do well? What are their likes, their dislikes? What do they need and want? Learning about the people you lead sends a clear message to them: They are important!

**MISSION:** Lead by Example

**WHAT TO SAY OR DO:**

1. Recall five leaders you have been led by or know personally who were either good, very good, or great leaders in your opinion. List them here:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

2. For each leader you listed use Table 9 to list five things they said or did that you believe made them good, very good, or great leaders. Table 8 shows some examples. Be as specific as possible.

Table 8

Leader 1:	Leader 2:	Leader 3:	Leader 4:	Leader 5:
<i>He made our jobs important. Whenever he assigned us a task, he never forgot about it and insisted we perform it correctly.</i>	<i>She always started her meetings on time. She was never late.</i>	<i>He was an excellent speaker. He always used words we understood.</i>	<i>She always dressed professionally. She was always neat.</i>	<i>He was good at telling us what had to be done for the day. We always understood what had to be done when the day began.</i>
<i>If he felt we had made an honest mistake, he tried to get the "lessons learned" from it.</i>	<i>She was a great listener. She always stopped what she was doing and focused on me.</i>	<i>He always fit the punishment to the crime, so to speak. Consequences were always fair, not too harsh.</i>	<i>She didn't micromanage us. If we knew how to do something, she let us do it.</i>	<i>He always ended the work week with a summary of what we had accomplished.</i>
<i>He was an excellent communicator. He always checked to make sure we understand what he was trying to tell us.</i>	<i>She held our feet to the fire when it came to getting the job done. She always said she expected us to be excellent.</i>	<i>Rewards were always a surprise from him. He would always surprise us when we had done a great job on something.</i>	<i>She was a good teacher. When I told her I didn't know how to do something she took her time to teach me how to do it.</i>	<i>He always took notes when we talked. That made me feel important.</i>
<i>He always was interested in us as people. He always asked about our families and how they were doing.</i>	<i>She always spoke with a calm voice. She never yelled at us even when we made mistakes.</i>	<i>I always felt like his focus was on us, not himself. He made sure we had what we needed to do our jobs.</i>	<i>She would send out email messages to us at least weekly just to tell us what she was thinking about as it related to work issues.</i>	<i>He made good decisions most of the time. Most importantly, he took the time to explain not only why he made it but what he considered.</i>

Leader 1:	Leader 2:	Leader 3:	Leader 4:	Leader 5:
<i>He never took advantage of us or made fun of us.</i>	<i>She never complained about her boss to us. We never knew if she was having a bad day with her boss.</i>	<i>He was consistent. In the same situations he acted the same way.</i>	<i>She was a good heat shield. I saw her take responsibility for our mistakes with her boss.</i>	<i>We always knew we had done poorly if he said, "I'm disappointed." That was enough.</i>

Table 9

Leader 1:	Leader 2:	Leader 3:	Leader 4:	Leader 5:

3. Using Table 9, circle or highlight the actions that you believe you do, or are able to do yourself.

4. Recall five leaders you have been led by or know personally who were either bad, very bad, or extremely bad leaders in your opinion. The leaders could be the same leaders you referred to in Table 9, or they may be different leaders. List them here:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

5. For each leader you listed, in Table 11, list five things they said or did that you believe made them bad, very bad, or extremely bad leaders. Table 10 shows some examples. Be as specific as possible.

Table 10

Leader 1:	Leader 2:	Leader 3:	Leader 4:	Leader 5:
<i>I never knew where I stood with her. Annual reviews were always a surprise.</i>	<i>We stopped giving him our suggestions because he often replied with, "That's not a good idea."</i>	<i>If I made a mistake, he'd often call me "stupid."</i>	<i>Even when we knew how to do something, she micromanaged us, constantly telling us how, what, and when to do something.</i>	<i>He expected us to know what he was thinking, yet he never told me!</i>
<i>She always waited until the end of the day before telling us we had to work late.</i>	<i>I asked him to teach me something and he told me he didn't have time.</i>	<i>I witnessed him give his supervisor a false report on the phone, telling him we had finished on time when he had not.</i>	<i>We never knew what he expected of us. He never met with us—ever.</i>	<i>His door was always closed. We could never get to see him.</i>
<i>She always said things like, "Make it happen," without telling us how to make it happen.</i>	<i>I once brought a problem to him and he said, "I don't want to hear about it."</i>	<i>He never checked to make sure I understood when he gave me a new assignment.</i>	<i>He once told me that he didn't think he had to thank anybody for doing their job.</i>	<i>We were often confused about priorities. When I asked him what he wanted me to work on, he said he didn't know.</i>
<i>She never seemed to recognize us when we did a good job.</i>	<i>Our meetings frequently turned into arguments with no resolution.</i>	<i>He publicly scolded one of my coworkers, accusing her of being lazy.</i>	<i>He never, not once, told me "Thank You."</i>	<i>He yelled at us quite a bit, or at least it seemed like he was yelling.</i>
<i>She took credit for an idea I gave her that saved us 5% of our quarterly budget.</i>	<i>He was constantly late for meetings yet he expected us to be there early, waiting for him.</i>	<i>He said to me, that we had to make sure he looked good in front of his boss.</i>	<i>One of my coworkers committed the same offense as I did. I was reprimanded while my coworker wasn't.</i>	<i>He docked me for being late to work, yet he was often late and his timesheet never reflected it.</i>

Leader 1:	Leader 2:	Leader 3:	Leader 4:	Leader 5:

Table 11

Leader 1:	Leader 2:	Leader 3:	Leader 4:	Leader 5:

In addition to Table 9 and the items you circled, list all of the positive examples you want to set as a leader in Table 12. Focus on what it looks like when you act it, not what your intentions are. Intentions don't serve as an example for others to follow. Two examples are listed in Table 12.

Table 12

Leader Example	Frequency of example (Constantly/Always, Daily, Weekly, Monthly, When Necessary)
<i>Greet everyone sincerely: Say "Good morning."</i>	<i>Daily</i>
<i>Make sure when I direct someone to perform a task they understand by asking them: "Is there anything I've asked you to do that you don't understand?"</i>	<i>When necessary</i>

Here is a blank Table 12 you can use for reproduction.

Table 12

Leader Example	Frequency of example (Constantly/Always, Daily, Weekly, Monthly, When Necessary)

Leader Example	Frequency of example (Constantly/Always, Daily, Weekly, Monthly, When Necessary)

You have now made a commitment-a commitment to lead by *positive* example. More importantly, the commitment is not to yourself, it is to the people you lead. Take it a step further and call attention to your commitment:

“I try to always lead by example. I want that example to be a good one. Here are some examples of what I mean: (choose a few from your list)

I may fall short from time to time. Please, I want you to remind me when you think I haven’t set a good example and I’ll correct it. It’s important to me.”

**WHY IT WILL WORK:**

Here’s the truth about leading by example. Leaders are ALWAYS leading by example. They sometimes lead with good examples and sometimes lead with poor examples but don’t fool yourself into thinking that people will only pay attention your good examples. They will be influenced by both good and poor examples and leaders cannot simply turn their example machines on and off at will. The research of social scientists tells us that people not only learn by doing, PEOPLE LEARN BY WATCHING OTHER PEOPLE! Leaders sometimes forget this simple truth but we only need to watch a toddler who is

learning how to get what she wants by crying learn how to get her mother's attention to remind ourselves of the power of learning by watching others.

You are always setting an example for people-they are always watching their leaders. It's up to you to make sure the examples are good ones.

MISSION: Pinpoint your organization's location in time and space. Perform a quick SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

Use all of the sources of information available to you to answer the questions in Chart 7: Focus on your organization, the things you are directly responsible for and over which you exercise control. For example, if you lead a work group that performs a customer relations function, focus on it, not the larger organization.

Chart 7 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
What are our major strengths? What do we do well?	What are our major weaknesses? What do we need to improve on?

<b>Opportunities</b> What are our major opportunities?	<b>Threats</b> What are our major threats?

You don't need to do days of research to complete this SWOT. On the other hand, don't overlook information simply because it doesn't match your desires or expectations. Be honest with yourself. A SWOT gives you a snapshot of where you are as an organizational leader and what is facing you.

#### WHY IT WILL WORK

Imagine driving on a highway at night. It's pitch dark, the only illumination comes from the headlights of the car you're driving. No other vehicles are in sight. You have no map, no GPS, no two-way radio, nothing except you and the car you're driving. How would you know which direction to drive? Which way do you go? You might guess and be right but wouldn't you rather know where you are, then choose the direction you take? Yes, of course.

Knowing where you are as a leader is vital, just like it's vital to know where you are when driving on a highway at night. Knowing where you are allows you to determine a point of departure, the point from which you will lead forward.

Strategies

- The most important set of actions you will ever perform as a leader are those associated with taking charge as a leader. The actions you take as a new organizational leader will set the tone and direction for you and the people you lead into the future.
- General Gordon Sullivan, former Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, wrote a book entitled, “Hope is Not a Method.” Don’t expect stuff to happen because your intentions are good, or because you hope they will happen.
- Expect to change. You will. The people around you will change you and you will change them. Performing the SWOT should tell us what is good. Keep it and make it better. Change what’s not good.
- You have no “grace period” when you take charge. You are in charge from the minute you become the leader.
- Never, never, never, say anything bad about your predecessor. It’s unprofessional.