



## Seven Leadership Skills for Forward-Thinking Growth

### 1 Seek out feedback

One of the first things you should start is encouraging feedback, by giving it frequently and requesting it even more often. Requesting feedback and then acting on it sends a clear and immediate message to your team that you care about their opinions and you are going to take action on their suggestions.

### 2 Engage in difficult conversations

In order to build the kind of relationships where team members feel safe to disagree and express differing opinions, you need to have a level of trust. Trust comes when you're honest and open with others. You can't do that without engaging in difficult conversations. Lying or avoiding challenging conversations will damage your relationships and make it impossible to create an environment of diverse thought.

### 3 Harness conflict

We waste too much time trying to resolve conflict. We need to focus on using conflict and disagreement to find creative and innovative solutions. When we immediately tamp down on disagreements, we stifle creativity and diversity of thought.

### 4 Seek commitment, not just compliance

Compliant employees do their jobs. For some managers, that's good enough. Managers who want to encourage thought diversity, however, need to move employees from compliance to commitment by stopping destructive habits, like saving feedback for the annual performance appraisal, or providing discipline that progresses from verbal warning to written warning to termination. Instead, you need to adopt commitment-generating habits like encouraging incremental changes, and observing and commenting on behaviors in the moment. A committed employee will tell you how she feels and what she thinks because she cares about the future of the organization.

### 5 Build a strong and diverse team

Hire for character and train for skills. No one wants to work on a team of people who are exactly alike. When you're filling out your team, look for people with different experiences, from different backgrounds, who will have different insights into the issues of your team. Diversity of character is often more valuable than the perfect skill set. Skills can be trained, but character is developed through experiences and over time.

### 6 Think creatively

Today we need to think creatively, not just critically. We need to think outside the box of the ways things have always been done. That kind of creative thinking cannot be done in a vacuum. You need the support of your team and their opinions to be successful.

### 7 Communicate clearly and effectively

There's no point in doing any of this if your message is a mess or missed. Clear and effective communication has to be the cornerstone of every effort you make with your team. Especially with a diverse workforce, clear communication and agreed-upon communication standards will ensure that you are all using the same map and heading in the same direction.

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