
Angie Morgan & Courtney Lynch, Lead Star's Founders

Best-selling authors Angie Morgan & Courtney Lynch learned these leadership fundamentals during their combined 18 years as Marine Corps Officers. Now they share practical leadership instruction with thousands of professionals in key Fortune 500 companies, law firms, professional service firms, nonprofits, and other leading organizations.



Learn to Follow So You Can Lead Well

by Whitney Hopler

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Leading and following may seem quite different, but they aren't mutually exclusive. In fact, the best leaders are those who recognize that they won't always be in charge and are able to support others well when working as part of a team.

Pursue success for all concerned. Strong leaders are followers who empower other people to bring about success for all concerned, says Angie Morgan, Co-Founder of Lead Star. "Leaders are dependent on their teams to be focused and success-oriented. They recognize that they may not always have the best solution to a problem. They need to empower those around them to bring solutions to the table. The success of a team never relies on a specific individual. The success of a team is dependent on all contributors. Leaders need to remember that they demonstrate in thought, word and deed how they expect others to behave. As a leader, if you want to encourage collaboration, camaraderie and teamwork then you have to exhibit those behaviors yourself."

Welcome contributions. Welcoming every team member's contributions leads to a greater result than just championing your own agenda, says Courtney Lynch, Co-Founder of Lead Star. "We don't have time to micromanage everyone's schedule or do all the work of our teams. In order to be effective and efficient, we need to rely upon every individual to fulfill their role, take initiative, and contribute to the team's goals. The success of our team

contributes to our own success. When we work together with teams we're able to get a diverse array of opinions that contribute to an even greater result in the end."

Recognize that many possible solutions exist. It's important to realize that there are many possible solutions to every problem you face, Morgan says. "Seek the advice and opinions of others. You don't always have the best solution to the problem. If you're open to collaboration, others will be more open to trust and respect your problem-solving process."

Check your ego at the door. You can learn to collaborate well with others when you "check your ego at the door," Lynch says. "The best type of follower is someone who cares about the health of the team and its success — and is less concerned about his or her own personal reward or gain. Bosses command, leaders convince. Bosses have egos, leaders are humble. Your leadership abilities expand every time you get the opportunity to follow another leader. When you can let go of your need to be in charge, you are open to the chance to learn another's best practices."

Let go of fear. Letting go of fear also helps open the door to successful collaboration, says Morgan. "Often, men and women feel threatened at the thought that someone out there might have a better idea. They may even consider that their job is on the line as a result of their insecurities. But leaders have to continuously be supportive of those around them who are trying to

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be stronger leaders. By being a follower, leaders still allow themselves to grow and develop — all the while encouraging growth and development for their colleagues.”

It's not a threat to be surrounded by talented, accomplished men and women, says Lynch. “Leaders need to recognize that it's a gift to be surrounded by extraordinary individuals — it's through these exchanges that leaders grow and develop.”

Pursue confidence. Confidence is vital to becoming a leader who can also follow well, Morgan says. “To pursue confidence, you have to start by ensuring your own personal performance is at its best. Once your performance level is high, then you feel less threatened and insecure about others and their success. You then have to get involved. You have to know how you can support others on their quest to develop their leadership abilities.”

Help others meet their goals. Volunteering to help other people meet their goals is a smart way to demonstrate support, Lynch says. “Step up to the plate and help someone else meet his or her objectives. This is a great way to expand your knowledge, contribute to your team and help get the job done for your organization.”

Listen well. Learning how to listen genuinely and carefully to the ideas that others on your team express will allow you to “build trust and support,” Morgan says. “As a leader, it's important to consider all opinions and approaches to problem solving. To be an effective team player, you have to encourage active participation and remember that everyone is entitled to their voice.”

As you continue to learn how to follow well, others will respect your leadership more and more, says Lynch. “Remember that leadership is not about your job title, position, power or prestige. Ultimately, leadership is about your ability to influence outcomes and inspire others. Following well allows you to earn the respect you need to perform those two key tasks.”