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# What Does a Disciplined Leader Look Like?



By Gary Seibert, CEO,  
**Small Business Resource Association**

Whether you are a sole proprietor, small or large business owner, you all have one thing in common, someone is the Leader of your business. However, the type of leader you are, will most likely impact differently, your personal life as well as the lives of your employees, the people you do business with and even your family. Great leaders may have different styles but if you were to look closely into what really makes them great, I believe you would find a lot of similarities. Therefore, this article will focus on Disciplined Leaders and their common characteristic of Consistency.

Discipline, simply put, is following rules or a code of ethics to live by. Discipline also creates habits and habits create routine and routine becomes who you are. Consistency is staying the same or performing good each time, therefore, being who you are all the time. People can trust leaders who are disciplined and consistent all the time.

Before we go any deeper into what the disciplined leader looks like, I would like to address the three basic styles/types of leadership. The first is known as a VISIONARY LEADER and he/she is driven by the desire to be part of something bigger than themselves and making a difference. The second is known as a MANAGERIAL LEADER and he/she is driven by accomplishments and getting results. The third is known as a TECHNICAL LEADER and he/she is driven by learning, innovation, curiosity and creativity. Put those characterizes into one human body and you have a SUPER HERO



LEADER. Very few people possess all those characteristics but a great leader usually has at least one of those characteristics and then finds other people to fill the other two spots.

Now we can start to look at the actual leader, beyond their style/type, to see what really makes them great. In my 50+ years of being in business I have had the privilege of knowing and working with some outstanding leaders. I have also been Blessed with several great partners and together we have identified 8 fundamental characteristics that we call the 8 Core Disciplines of a great Leader, no matter what style/type they are. What makes them even better is their consistency, they perform these disciplines the same, every time with everyone.

Here are the 8 characteristics of a disciplined leader that they live by consistently:

**Trust and Respect** – Trust is Reliance on and confidence in another person or entity to do what is expected. Respect is Esteem for a sense of worth of another person. Both Trust and Respect are regarded as the necessary foundation of any successful leader. Question—What do you do to instill Trust and Respect in others?

**Effective Communication** – Only happens when one feels safe to express their opinions, receives reliable information, shares common goals, engages in reflective listening, knows that their opinions are valued and meaningful. Question—What causes Effective Communication to breakdown for you?

**Establishing Common Goals** – Establishing a desired set of measurable results that the organization plans to achieve by a specific future date. Question—What is the Common Goal of your business?

**Planning and Execution** – The written process that the leader uses to achieve their common goals by attaching specific people and dated tasks to create easily measured and evaluated results. Question—What input do you have in the Planning process?

**Defining Roles and Responsibilities** – Assigning specific, individual functions each member of the group provides; and the corresponding tasks and actions for which they alone are accountable. Question—What are your specific Roles and Responsibilities?

**Coaching** – The practice of providing positive feedback and support to others while offering constructive advice to help them recognize opportunities to improve and achieve higher levels of personal performance and organizational effectiveness. Question—Where are you currently Coaching? Where do you need more Coaching?

**Best Practices** – Proven, repeatable procedures that have been demonstrated over time to be the most effective (best results) and efficient (least effort) method for accomplishing a given task. Question—Do you have a set of defined Best Practices? How do you implement them?

**Continual Improvement** – An ongoing effort to improve by conducting regular evaluations to learn from the experience (successes and failures) of others by making positive adjustments to increase performance. Question—How often do you re-evaluate?

At the core of peak performance is a leader that consistently demonstrates these eight disciplines. Why are they so important? The first discipline provides a foundation that is strong and allows the other 7 disciplines to function at a much greater level. Disciplines 2,3,4 Unify the people involved in your business and the last four help the leader implement what needs to be done to achieve success. Please note that you cannot overlook or eliminate one of these disciplines. If you do, you will experience a breakdown in your ability to move smoothly through your daily routine without problems and difficult decisions to deal with.

Great leaders are not only great in their business life but equally great in their personal and family lives. They are well respected in their church and community and most likely are an inspiration and encourager to all that know and work with them. Be Disciplined and Consistent and you will be a much better and possibly a GREAT LEADER.

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# HOW TO LEVERAGE SUSTAINABILITY AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



By Lisa Peterson, Aftan Engineering, Proud SBRA Member

You've seen the sustainability goals and environmental commitments from well-known corporations like Amazon, Target, Wal-Mart, and McDonalds. Most large corporations, even if they are not familiar household names, have also implemented these goals and commitments leveraging sustainability as a competitive advantage; but how does a smaller business leverage sustainability as a competitive edge?

## Keep it simple

Find an activity that you already do that demonstrates a commitment to sustainability. Maybe you've converted to LED lighting, installed low flush toilets, implemented a recycling program, or incorporated a recycled material into your product or service. You've likely done these initiatives for the cost savings that they bring; but these are good for the environment too. There is a story to tell that your sustainability-minded stakeholders will care about.

## Build a bridge to the ever-growing population of sustainability-minded consumers

Not only have we seen an increase in sustainability-focused shareholders and investors, but we've also seen an increase in sustainability-focused purchasing for both b-c and b-b relationships. Individual consumers care about the environment; and given a choice between two seemingly equivalent products or services, will choose the one that is kinder to the environment. In the case of serving other businesses, there is an increase in sustainability requirements that are being included in purchasing agreements. If you wait until that requirement shows up in the next potential contract or purchase order, and you have done nothing, you may get a lesser share of that customer's demand or be eliminated as a supplier. Most large corporations have made bold public commitments to sustainability. If your product or service is feeding into that supply chain in any way, the inclusion of sustainability metrics is flowing through the entire supply chain network. Make sure your customers know about the great things you're already doing. Take control of your sustainability journey and tell that story.

## Solicit ideas from your employees

Your employees are great ambassadors for your company who not only engage with customers but also with their social circles, thereby widening your reach. Get them involved; and get their ideas. They know where inefficiencies lie in your processes. Where there are inefficiencies, there are opportunities for improvement; and when

you make those improvements, you save money and have a sustainability improvement. That sustainability improvement could come through streamlined data entry or paperwork, increased throughput, reduced scrap, reduced raw material use, or less machine time, to name just a few. When the employees are involved, they feel engaged and empowered, which is another benefit; but it also makes the employees more likely to share that story with people in their professional and social networks.

## Support ecological and environmental not-for-profits

Most companies have not-for-profits that they support in some way. Customers and communities love to see that businesses are good corporate citizens. Also, employees love to be involved in the community as representatives of their employers. Review your list of not-for-profits that you support and be sure to include some not-for-profits that are focused on the environment or ecology.

Sustainability is an important part of your marketing strategy, your financial strategy and your HR strategy. Remember to look for an environmental footprint improvement anywhere you find cost savings and tell that sustainability story. The term sustainability includes three pillars – planet, people, and profit. This is also known as the triple bottom line. If you can do something that increases profit, delights people, and is good for the environment, that's a win-win-win and that's sustainability. Don't wait for mandates. Be a sustainability leader who defines what can be done for the betterment of your company and the environment.

These ideas are quite simple, are great ways to get started on sustainability initiatives, and can be implemented without any sustainability expertise. If you're ready to move beyond these simple ideas, Aftan Engineering can help with the next steps such as quantifying your environmental footprint, conducting life cycle assessments on your products/processes/services, preparing for ISO 14001 certification, and incorporating sustainability in your annual investor and shareholder reports. To learn more please contact Lisa Peterson at Aftan Engineering: lpeterson@aftan.com or 610-914-1356.

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