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LEADING — FROM THE — FRONT



NO-EXCUSE LEADERSHIP
TACTICS FOR WOMEN

CAPTAINS OF MARINES

ANGIE MORGAN AND COURTNEY LYNCH

10-Week Leadership Challenge
Your Team's Guide to Leadership Excellence

10-Week Leadership Challenge

Your Team's Guide to Leadership Excellence

Welcome to Lead Star's 10-Week Leadership Challenge! This kit is a guided program designed for peer leaders or named managers seeking personal and professional development opportunities for their team, office or work group. The 10-Week Challenge offers practical leadership guidance and this kit provides the guidelines to kick off the challenge.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The goal of the 10-Week Challenge is to spark a dialogue within your team on the topic of leadership while providing each member practical leadership principles they can use in all aspects of their lives. Stronger leaders at home and at work contribute to more focused, effective teams.

The program is centered on the best-selling book, *Leading from the Front*, and though the book was written with a female audience in mind, its Marine Corps inspired leadership message transcends gender. The 10-Week Challenge is designed for an inclusive audience; men and women alike will discover how useful and relevant *Leading from the Front's* leadership message is to their roles and responsibilities. The program takes approximately one hour a week (time is divided between reading and discussion) and lasts ten weeks as the team explores the ten key leadership behaviors offered in *Leading from the Front*.

ACTION STEPS FOR LEADING A 10-WEEK LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

1

Identify the team members who will be participating in your 10-Week Challenge.

The best groups for the 10-Week Challenge are those comprised of members from various levels and/or positions within your organization. The ideal size for a 10-Week Challenge team is 10-15 members. If you manage or serve as a peer leader to a larger group, consider dividing your organization into small groups, delegating the management of the group to those who are seeking to develop their skills in this area. (A [sample email announcement](#) for the 10-Week Leadership Challenge follows this section.)

2

Outline the logistics for your group.

Decide when your team will meet each week — weekly discussions are designed to last 30 minutes. You can incorporate the 10-Week Challenge into your current staff meeting or you can set aside a designated time each week for your team's leadership study. Plan meeting times that will allow for optimal attendance. Inspire your group to commit to attending all sessions through your example and personal commitment to the program.

3

Make sure all group members have a copy of ***Leading from the Front***.

Books may be purchased at all major retailers. Online pricing is often most competitive. Amazon.com and Walmart.com consistently have the best price on the book. The book may also be ordered directly from our publisher, McGraw-Hill, at www.mhprofessional.com. If possible, your organization could provide a copy of the book to each participant. If you are purchasing more than 50 copies of *Leading from the Front*, contact Lead Star directly at 1-800-381-7780 to inquire about bulk purchasing at a discount.

4

Communicate regularly with your group.

Each week, provide every member of your group with a copy of the **10-Week Leadership Challenge Weekly Guide** prior to your meeting. Group members should complete their reading assignment before the weekly meeting. Each week's reading will take approximately 20–30 minutes. Set clear standards for participation (each member must attend the weekly meetings) and hold team members accountable for completing reading assignments.

5

Be respectful of your group's time.

Start and end all 10-Week Challenge meetings promptly. Additional discussion can be conducted via email for those interested in commenting on thoughts presented during the weekly meeting. Make sure your meetings are organized and focused. Each **10-Week Challenge Weekly Meeting Agenda** lists the focus principle for the week, key themes to convey to your group during your dialogue, and discussion questions to keep your meeting on point.

6

At the conclusion of the program, CELEBRATE!

Also, provide your materials and any best practices for running a group to others within your organization. Those interested in leading a 10-Week Challenge may download copies of the 10-Week Leadership Challenge Guide at www.leadstar.us. Serve as a resource to others within your organization as they take the 10-Week Leadership Challenge with their team.

Sample Email Announcement

*Once you have organized the logistics for your group's experience of the 10-Week Leadership Challenge and have obtained a copy of *Leading from the Front* for each participant, send an email or provide a hard copy memo explaining the Challenge and detailing the start date and meeting times. Here's a simple email/memo you can cut, paste, and personalize for your Challenge group members:*

Hello all,

I know each of you are constantly seeking opportunities to develop personally and professionally. During the next couple of months our team will be participating in a 10-Week Leadership Challenge designed to make us all better leaders. The skills we learn through this challenge will be practical and relevant. I'm confident at the conclusion of the program we will understand how we can use leadership skills in all aspects of our lives.

As we all are busy people, I assure you completing the challenge will be a great use of your time. The 10-Week Challenge only takes about an hour a week to complete. Half of that time will be spent reading a chapter of the best-selling leadership book, *Leading from the Front*. Then each week we'll spend 30 minutes discussing the book and its practical leadership principles. Our weekly meetings will take place at _____ on _____ in conference room _____.

I will make sure each of you get a copy of *Leading from the Front* in the near future. When you get the book, you'll notice that it is targeted to women. The authors of the book are two former Marine Corps Captains, so I know their message is relevant to men as well. By reading this book as a team, not only will we learn about leadership, we will also be embracing diversity of thought. Our first meeting will be on _____. I'll forward along your first reading assignment next.

I am looking forward to completing this challenge with you!

Week One Guide

Hello,

This week we start our 10-Week Leadership Challenge. The 10-Week Challenge will require you to read the best-selling leadership book, *Leading from the Front*. A copy of the book has been provided for you. Please see me or email me if you have not already received your book.

Thank you for completing your first reading assignment prior to our meeting. The first assignment is to read through page 31, including the Forward, Preface, Introduction, and Chapter 1.

From the reading you'll:

- Learn how surprisingly relevant Marine Corps leadership lessons are to all of the roles you fill.
- Get to know the authors' definition of what a leader is and does.
- Learn what "leading from the front" means.
- Recognize how having double standards can hamper your leadership abilities.

In our weekly meeting we'll discuss the book's definition of a leader, the importance of meeting and exceeding standards, and your thoughts on the reading.

We'll be meeting at _____ on _____ in conference room _____.

See you there!

Week One Meeting Agenda

Open the meeting by asking each participant to introduce themselves and provide one insight from the first reading assignment that they found interesting or profound and why they found that point significant.

Focus Principle: Meet and Exceed the Standards You Ask of Others — Lead from the Front

KEY THEMES

- You must lead through actions, not through words.
- One standard for all; make sure you perform at the level you expect from others.
- People who have two standards (a high one for others and a low one they keep) will eventually have a tough time influencing outcomes and inspiring others—no matter what their job title.
- As a leader you have a choice; your example can be a powerful or powerless one.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The book defines a leader as one “who influences outcomes and inspires others.” Ask your group if they have realized that they are all leaders who must influence outcomes and inspire others?

Angie and Courtney write that, “Being a leader has nothing to do with your job title, salary, pay grade, the number of people who report to you, or your department’s budget.” Did you believe this statement when you started reading *Leading from the Front*? Is reading this book changing your opinion of what leadership is all about?

What are two professional standards that are important to you (e.g. be on time for meetings, meet deadlines on projects, return e-mails in a timely manner, or recognize outstanding performance on your team) and why?

What skill sets do you rely on to meet the professional standards you have?

What are some of our team performance standards?

The book states that true leaders take responsibility for serving as role models to those around them — even those that do not necessarily work for you. Share an example of how you’ve served as a role model to a colleague or family member.

Standards are meaningless unless people are held accountable for failing to meet them. Why do you think it is challenging to hold others accountable when they fail to perform?

Angie and Courtney encourage everyone to “take the initiative and prepare before you are required to perform.” Discuss new ways that you can take initiative and prepare on the job.

Week Two Guide

Hi all,

Last week's Challenge Discussion was a great one. I appreciate everyone taking the time to prepare for the meeting. This week's reading assignment (to be completed before our meeting) is Chapter 2, pages 33–52. This chapter focuses on being decisive and the importance of making timely decisions.

From the reading you'll:

- Understand why timely decisions are important.
- Learn the Marine Corps' decision making philosophy.
- Recognize that perfect decisions are usually impossible to make.
- See why saying "no" can often be the best choice.

In our weekly meeting we'll be discussing decision making and how it relates to what we do. We'll also focus on why being decisive is important.

We'll be meeting at _____ on _____ in conference room _____.

See you there!

Week Two Meeting Agenda

Begin this second meeting with everyone providing a quick recap of how they have begun implementing the first principle, meet and exceed the standards you ask of others — lead from the front.

Focus Principle: Make Timely Decisions — Find the 80% Solution

KEY THEMES

- Others look to leaders to be decisive.
- Striving for 100% of the information leads to analysis paralysis.
- Failing to decide makes you reactive instead of proactive.
- Saying “no” is often the best decision.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Leaders are decision makers. What are some of the barriers that keep you from making timely decisions?

Think of a time you delayed making a decision. Describe what happened or failed to happen.

Many people have a hard time saying “no.” Do you struggle with saying no? Can you share a time when the inability to say no affected you or someone you know?

When someone is decisive, how does that affect your impression of them? Why do you have more confidence in this person?

Identify a decision you need to make in the near future: Do you have 80% of the information to make this decision? If not, what additional information can you realistically expect to have before you must make the call?

Week Three Guide

Hello team,

It's week three of our 10-Week Challenge! Our discussions have been quite interesting. For this week's meeting, be sure to complete your reading of Chapter 3 (pages 53–69.)

From the reading you'll:

- Learn why it is so important to accept responsibility for your role in problems.
- Recognize areas of life where it seems easier to place blame instead of accepting responsibility.
- Understand how "the blame game" impedes progress.
- Learn why focusing on solutions is significant to being a leader.

In our weekly meeting we'll be discussing how accepting responsibility is often difficult but why it is essential to success.

We'll be meeting at _____ on _____ in conference room _____.

See you there!

Week Three Meeting Agenda

Open this meeting with a general discussion of the key themes in the chapter. Have each participant share a new insight or realization they had after reading this chapter.

Focus Principle: Seek to Take Responsibility Before You Begin to Place Blame

KEY THEMES

- Jumping on the blame bandwagon can be fun, but ultimately it is unproductive.
- Nonleaders seek to blame others or events; leaders take responsibility for their actions or inactions before examining other reasons for the problem.
- Your actions and thoughts are the only things you have control over.
- Being accountable for your performance inspires trust and confidence.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

"The key to achieving your goals and living a life that is in balance begins with taking responsibility for your actions and your decisions, rather than making excuses for your shortcomings." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Whether at work or at home, most of us have been in situations or face problems that seem overwhelming. Angie and Courtney write, "When you feel overwhelmed or things seem out of control, recognize that you probably had something to do with creating the chaos, and this means that you also have the power to change it." Discuss techniques you use to solve problems in these types of situations.

In what areas of life is it easier to place blame than accept responsibility?

It's easy to recognize someone who doesn't employ this principle. How do you react or respond to someone who fails to accept responsibility for their actions or inactions?

How can you hold yourself accountable to meeting the standard this principle articulates? Can you clearly see how if everyone on our team met this standard our performance would improve?

Week Four Guide

Hello everyone,

Thank you again for your time spent at last week's meeting. I appreciate everyone's efforts to make our 10-Week Leadership Challenge successful. This week's reading assignment is Chapter 4, pages 71–88.

From the reading you'll:

- Learn the best way to build strong teams.
- Discover ways to develop your servant leadership abilities.
- Understand why caretaking is an important part of leadership.
- Recognize the many ways you can provide care for your colleagues.

In our weekly meeting we'll be discussing this "service principle" and how it relates to our day-to-day job performance. Be prepared to share your thoughts on the topic and your caretaking best practices.

We'll be meeting at _____ on _____ in conference room _____.

See you there!

Week Four Meeting Agenda

Open your meeting by discussing this point: caretaking is the heart and soul of the Marine Corps' leadership philosophy. Were any of your team members surprised to find that a book derived from the leadership teachings of our nation's toughest military branch advocates servant leadership practices?

Focus Principle: True Leaders Dedicate Themselves to Service — Take Care of Those You Lead

KEY THEMES

- Caretaking is the secret to building successful, high performing teams.
- Caretaking examples include: recognizing superior achievement, coaching underperformers, listening, and keeping your team informed.
- Dedication to service begins with knowing and understanding your team members.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Leadership is about taking care of those around you. In what ways are you a caretaker? Discuss additional ways that you can be of service to team members or others around you.

Angie shares the story of her brother's suicide and the subsequent reaction by her boss. How did you feel about his reaction to the situation? How would you have handled the situation differently if you were her boss?

Leaders also need balance in their lives. What ways have you found to put yourself first and keep balance in your life?

Ask each participant to articulate and commit to two action steps they can take this week to be a better caretaker.

Most can relate to working for a boss who was not a caretaker. What about those that have worked with managers who are caretakers? Have them share the caretaking best practices they benefited from.

Week Five Guide

Hi all,

We've made it to the half way point of our 10-Week Leadership Challenge. Great job! Your reading assignment before our meeting is to read Chapter 5 from page 89–105.

From the reading you'll:

- Learn about the importance of emotional resolve.
- Discover strategies for bringing calm to chaos.
- Understand why extreme emotions are alienating to others.
- Recognize why overreacting puts others on the defensive.

In our weekly meeting we'll be discussing the significance of emotional resolve. We'll focus on how this principle is easy to understand, but often very difficult to implement. I look forward to hearing your perspectives.

We'll be meeting at _____ on _____ in conference room _____.

See you there!

Week Five Meeting Agenda

This week's material introduces the topic of emotional resolve; or the importance of harnessing your emotions and putting them to use in productive ways, instead of allowing your emotions to hinder your ability to be a confident leader. Begin your meeting discussing each participant's thoughts on the need for emotional resolve. Leave the conversation open-ended as the topic of emotions will come up again during Week Eight of the challenge.

Focus Principle: Think Before You Act — Especially Before You Overreact

KEY THEMES

- Save the drama for your mama.
- When you fail to maintain emotional resolve you alienate yourself from others.
- Extreme emotions inhibit progress and resolution.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Angie and Courtney write that, "Women are perceived as being more likely to display their emotions in public than men, and that perception can interfere with their ability to lead." Do you agree or disagree?

How can you minimize overreactions and improve your ability to stay composed? Have a couple of volunteers share best practices with the group.

Emotional resolve is a skill most believe they have; only to find it elusive when they need it the most. What circumstances, or actions by others, most often cause you to overreact?

Courtney shares the story of a fellow Marine, Lisa Randall, who earned a reputation for tirades and breakdowns at work. Have you or someone you know ever had problems controlling emotions in a professional setting? Discuss how this affected their performance at work?

What happens to team member who consistently overreacts to new information? How do others respond to individuals who regularly lose their cool?

This 5th principle seems easy in theory, but can be very difficult to practice in stressful times. Many leadership principles are that way. Angie and Courtney believe that leadership is not about being complex, it's about being effective. Do you agree that the mastery of skills sets such as caretaking, emotional resolve, decisiveness and the acceptance of responsibility will improve your ability to influence outcomes and inspire others? Do you recognize the importance of developing these skills?

Week Six Guide

Hello all,

Welcome to week six of the 10-Week Leadership Challenge. I am working to implement all of the principles we have learned about to date — now I know why our program is called a “Challenge.” The reading assignment for this week is Chapter 6. It’s on pages 107–124.

From the reading you’ll:

- Learn best practices for crisis management.
- Understand the importance of taking action to influence outcomes and inspire others.
- Recognize why creative solutions are often best.
- Discover how planning and initiative can help prevent crisis situations.

In our weekly meeting we’ll be discussing best practices for responding to crisis and why crisis management is important.

We’ll be meeting at _____ on _____ in conference room _____.

See you there!

Week Six Meeting Agenda

Leaders are people others look to in crisis situations. Begin your meeting by asking each group participant to name a person they would want with them in a crisis situation and why they chose that person. Discussion of this question will reinforce the leadership traits one needs to implement this principle.

Focus Principle: When Faced with a Crisis — Aviate, Navigate, Communicate

KEY THEMES

- Leaders are always anticipating problems and ways to resolve them quickly.
- It's tempting to "panic and freeze" during a crisis. Instead, this is when action is most needed.
- Your ability to aviate, navigate, and communicate is the key to work/life balance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How do you normally handle a crisis? Do you usually "panic and freeze," or perhaps you get caught up in the communication phase and neglect to aviate and navigate?

How can our team do a better job of anticipating problems and resolving issues quickly?

What changes should our team be anticipating right now?

We have all faced crisis situations where we were required to come up with a solution. Share with the group a creative solution that you are particularly proud of.

In a crisis situation which part of "aviate, navigate, communicate" is most important?

Week Seven Guide

Hi Everyone,

Only three weeks left until we reach the finish line for our 10-Week Leadership Challenge. This week, please read Chapter 7 of *Leading from the Front* before our meeting. It's on pages 125–140.

From the reading you'll:

- Understand the essential elements of success.
- Recognize the importance of setting goals.
- Discover why a methodical approach to achievement often yields the best results.
- Learn why it's important to dream big!

In our weekly meeting we'll be discussing goal setting and the importance of having a vision for success. Come prepared to talk about your goals and ambitions.

We'll be meeting at _____ on _____ in conference room _____.

See you there!

Week Seven Meeting Agenda

Today's topic focuses on the importance of goal setting. Everyone has goals they meet and some they just can't seem to accomplish. As you introduce this topic, ask your group members to discuss a goal that they did not achieve and which part of the "recipe for success" was missing.

Focus Principle: Courage + Initiative + Perseverance + Integrity = Success

KEY THEMES

- Optimism fuels courage. If you fear failure you'll never be brave.
- The sooner you take action towards accomplishing a goal, the closer you are towards success.
- If you can be honest with yourself, it's easier to be honest with everyone.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The book outlines four steps to success in anything you do — courage, initiative, perseverance, and integrity. How can you apply this formula in your own life?

Which step in the "recipe for success" do you find most challenging? Is it courage, initiative, perseverance, or integrity?

What would you consider your most significant personal accomplishment? How about your most significant professional accomplishment?

What are the goals of our team in the short-term? How about in the long-term?

Angie and Courtney encourage everyone to set large goals. Discuss with the group one new goal that you can set for yourself. What are the first steps you can take toward accomplishing this goal?

Week Eight Guide

Hello all,

Week Eight finds us touching back on the topic of emotional resolve as we read Chapter 8 on pages 141–158. This chapter discusses the “crying principle.” As you read through this chapter notice how you can also substitute the word cry with “whine,” “complain,” or “guilt.” You’ll see why once you’ve finished the chapter.

From the reading you’ll:

- Understand the impact of emotions in the work place.
- Recognize the negative impact your tears have on your career.
- Learn practical solutions for harnessing your emotions.
- Realize that emotions are not bad; there is just a time and place for displaying them.

In our weekly meeting we should have a lively debate about this principle. Our discussion will focus on the impact of crying, whining and complaining in professional situations.

We’ll be meeting at _____ on _____ in conference room _____.

See you there!

Week Eight Meeting Agenda

Open your meeting allowing participants to discuss whatever is on their mind about the topics discussed in Chapter 8. After a lively debate of the principle, be sure to leave your group with the thought that emotions are not bad — everyone cries, whines, or complains there is just a time and a place for these heightened emotions.

Focus Principle: Don't Cry Over Something That Won't Cry Over You

KEY THEMES

- Respect and value your emotions.
- Missed deadlines, heavy workloads, and insensitive bosses are never going to cry over you. Don't cry over them.
- 99.9% of the time, tears have a negative impact on professional relationships.
- Whining, complaining, and feeling excessive guilt are emotions that are similar to crying.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Courtney shared her story of how her rifle instructor taught her not to cry over something that wouldn't cry over her. Have you ever let emotions get in the way at work? How do you think it affected the way others perceived you?

How could you coach a colleague who has difficulty keeping their emotions under control?

Many mistakenly believe that they can have an emotional outburst at work on Tuesday and return on Wednesday and everything will be fine. What perspective would you offer a person who believes crying, whining or complaining in professional settings is acceptable?

In today's times, are people too quick to complain? Do you find you respect individuals who exercise constraint when it comes to complaining or whining about circumstances?

Week Nine Guide

Hello,

I am very much enjoying our weekly leadership dialogues. The reading assignment for this week is to read Chapter 9 on pages 159–174.

From the reading you'll:

- Discover why it is important to value your apologies.
- Recognize the pitfalls of passive communications.
- Understand why over apologizing can chip away at your credibility.
- Learn why apologies are not a substitute for performance.

In our weekly meeting we'll attempt to understand why the phrase "I'm sorry" is overused. We'll also discuss alternatives to the phrase and why action steps are better than empty apologies.

We'll be meeting at _____ on _____ in conference room _____.

See you there!

Week Nine Meeting Agenda

Today's discussion focuses on a principle that seems like a minor point, but actually touches on significant issues like performance, passive communication, empathy, and customer/client service. Open your meeting by asking your team how often they usually apologize during a 24 hour period.

Focus Principle: Say You're Sorry Only When You're at Fault

KEY THEMES

- Excessive apologies waste time that is best spent working on a resolution to the problem.
- When you over apologize you come across as a victim.
- Only apologize if you can ask for forgiveness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What is your experience with this leadership principle? Do you apologize unnecessarily, or have you witnessed the damaging effects of those who say they're sorry too much?

Why do you think the phrase, "I'm sorry" is overused?

People say they apologize to show empathy. Often providing an apology excuses you from taking an action step. Are there better ways you can express empathy through your actions, instead of just through your speech?

Angie and Courtney write that, "Leaders say they're sorry only when they are at fault." If you are one of the many who overuses the phrase "I'm sorry," do you ask yourself what you are apologizing for? What is most often your reason for apologizing?

Angie and Courtney wrote this principle after noticing how many times their private sector co-workers (especially their female peers) used this phrase. Why do women seem to apologize more than men?

Week Ten Guide

Congratulations! We have made it to our final week of our 10-Week Leadership Challenge. Your reading assignment this week is to finish *Leading from the Front* by reading Chapter 10.

From the reading you'll:

- Learn the importance of being an authentic, credible leader.
- Understand why being the best version of yourself is a goal you should focus on meeting.
- Discover that you can learn best practices from others, but when you try to practice being just like another person you are setting yourself up for failure.
- Recognize that you need to seek to be respected instead of searching for affirmation from your colleagues.

In our weekly meeting we'll discuss this paramount principle, "Always lead as you are." We'll also share our overall thoughts on the 10-Week Leadership Challenge. I hope that you have enjoyed the experience as much as I have.

We'll be meeting at _____ on _____ in conference room _____.

See you there!

Week Ten Meeting Agenda

Congratulations! Your group has completed the 10-Week Leadership Challenge. Spend time during this meeting celebrating your accomplishments. Explain to the group where they can find copies of this guide (at Lead Star's website: www.leadstar.us). A starter question for this week can be a quick focus on what each participant enjoyed most about this leadership journey.

Focus Principle: Always Lead as You Are

KEY THEMES

- Authentic leadership works best. Strive to develop your own personal leadership style.
- Earn respect through your performance and true personality.
- Focus on understanding your strengths and weaknesses and then strive to develop and improve.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Angie and Courtney encourage readers to use their unique personalities to be better leaders. Discuss three of your strengths. How can these qualities help you become a stronger, more confident leader?

Do you believe it is important to lead as you are? Why or why not?

How would you describe your leadership style?

The book presents ten leadership principles. Of the principles discussed in the book, which one resonates with you the most? Why?

The goal of this book is to teach readers how to make behavioral changes that can vastly improve their careers and their lives. Did you come away with any specific advice to apply to your own life after reading *Leading from the Front*?

Has completing the 10-Week Leadership Challenge increased your interest in the subject of leadership?

What will your team do to continue the dialogue on leadership that has begun as a result of the 10-Week Challenge? Make it a group goal to spark the leadership dialogue by encouraging your colleagues within other departments to complete the 10-Week Leadership Challenge.

About Lead Star



Lead Star is a leadership development consulting firm with expertise in designing and delivering training programs for the world's best organizations. At Lead Star, we believe that leadership can help you create a better workplace, a better life, and a better you. We look forward to supporting you every step of the way on your leadership journey. Please visit us online at www.leadstar.us for additional leadership development resources.