

Would you listen to a man who rode a water buffalo?

Sage says the best leaders keep low profiles

According to legend, the Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu, founder of Taoism (pronounced Dowism), was immaculately conceived from a shooting star and born white-haired, 62 years old, during the sixth century B.C. He grew younger as time passed.

Folklore, certainly! But historians agree that Lao-tzu lived and did indeed write the material attributed to him.

It is said Lao-tzu was saddened by the ways of most people, and eventually rode away into the desert on a water buffalo. But before crossing the Great Wall of China, he was persuaded to set his principles down in writing. Among them, this advice to leaders:

“A leader is best when people barely know that he exists, not so good when people obey him and acclaim him, worse when they despise him. Fail to honor people, they fail to honor you. But of a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will all say, *We did this ourselves.*”



Would you listen to a man who rode a water buffalo? If so, you might benefit immensely.

Here's what you can do: As a leader, keep a low profile. Treat your associates respectfully, and always credit them with your organization's success, so they think, “We did this ourselves!”

A word from the coach

Legendary Coach Bear Bryant said this:

I'm just a plowhand from Arkansas, but I have learned how to hold a team together...



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...how to lift some men up, how to calm down others, until finally they've got one heartbeat together, a team. There's just three things I'd ever say:

1. If anything goes bad, “I did it.”
2. If anything goes semi-good, then “We did it.”
3. If anything goes real good, then “You did it.”

That's all it takes to get people to win football games for you!

The Wizard of Westwood

In your profession who is considered “the best”, or “the one people aspire to be?” You probably could name someone who’s legendary, who’s still talked about decades after they’re gone.

John Wooden, former coach of the UCLA basketball team for 27 years retired back in 1975. He was an amazing coach who won ten NCAA National Basketball Champions in a 12 year period, and no other coach, in the over 70 years there’s been a college championship, has ever won even half as many!

Yet Coach Wooden’s greatest contribution to the 180 players he coached at UCLA was as a mentor and philosopher. If you haven’t done so already, I strongly encourage you to get every one of the six books he’s written—and read them over and over again!

The first is *Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections On and Off the Court* by John Wooden and Steve Jamison. Here are just ten of the coach’s favorite maxims ...

1. *The best way to improve the team is to improve yourself.*
2. *Big things are accomplished only through the perfection of minor details.*
3. *Discipline yourself and others won’t need to.*
4. *If you do not have the time to do it right, when will you find the time to do it over?*
5. *The smallest good deed is better than the best intention.*

6. *You discipline those under your supervision to correct, to help, to improve—not to punish.*
7. *Goals achieved with little effort are seldom worthwhile or lasting.*
8. *Make sure the team members know they’re working with you, not for you.*
9. *What is right is more important than who is right.*
10. *You handle things. You work with people.*

Here’s what you can do: Consider adding these five other books to your library...

1. *Coach Wooden’s Pyramid of Success: Building Blocks for a Better Life* by John Wooden and Jay Carty
2. *Wooden on Leadership* by John Wooden
3. *Coach Wooden’s Pyramid of Success Playbook* by John Wooden and Jay Carty
4. *The Essential Wooden: A Lifetime of Lessons on Leaders and Leadership* by John Wooden and Steve Jamison
5. *My Personal Best: Life Lessons from an All-American Journey* by John Wooden and Steve Jamison

Let the Wizard of Westwood help you be an even bigger winner in your game of life!

Great Soul

Gandhi could always laugh at himself

Mohandas K. Gandhi led the people of India to freedom from British colonial rule in 1947. His followers called him the Mahatma, or Great Soul—yet Gandhi could always laugh at himself.

One day, a writer went to visit Gandhi, hoping to get his signature on a photograph. Upon arriving at Gandhi’s hut, he found the Great Soul wearing nothing but a dhoti (a white cloth, wrapped between the legs), sitting cross-legged on the earthen floor, spinning cotton thread by hand.

The writer introduced himself, showed Gandhi the picture and asked for the famous man’s autograph. Gandhi burst into laughter.

“Why do you laugh?” the writer asked. “Isn’t the picture a good likeness?”

“It’s an excellent picture,” Gandhi said, still laughing. “It’s just that I sometimes forget what an ugly little man I am!”

The writer was perplexed. Here was the most important man in India, laughing uproariously—at himself.

But later, on his way home, the writer realized an important fact. Part of what made Gandhi the Great Soul was his ability not to take himself too seriously!

How about you? Are you able to laugh at yourself?

Here’s what you can do: Take what you DO seriously, but don’t take yourself too seriously. When the occasion arises, laugh at yourself. You’ll find that others will respect and admire you for it.

Help the best!

A risky but potentially rewarding approach to leadership

Let's say you are a sales manager. On your team are a few professionals who always do well, several average producers, and some marginal hangers on. Who do you invest your time with? Do you divide it equally among them all? Or, do you help those who need you, and allow the others to succeed on their own?

One sales manager's unusual approach is this: *help the best—and forget the rest*. This manager devoted 80 percent of her time to the top third of her sales team.

She coached them, listened to their concerns, praised their efforts, and offered them continual encouragement. Fifteen percent of her time she invested in recruiting new personnel. And the remaining five percent of her time was spent with the other members of her team. Despite complaints from the bottom two-thirds, she did not alter

her style. Many of the average and marginal producers became frustrated and quit. A few improved their performance so they could receive some attention too. The top producers, of course, thought her approach was great and as a result, *sales boomed*.

By helping her best people do even better, the sales manager earned far more profits for her organization than when she tried to help everyone. This unconventional approach to management was indeed risky, but it continued to produce outstanding results for years to come.

Here's what you can do: *Don't neglect your best employees. The more you give them, the more they will reward you and your organization. Invest your time where you're sure of the greatest possible return.*

The “forgotten factor”

Research proves it's vital to your happiness

“Thank you—your kindness is much appreciated. The time you took to help on Saturday was a turning point. Your words of encouragement got me back on course and enabled me to solve the difficulty. A grateful friend _____.”

And those 38 words would probably take you less than two minutes to write by hand.

Research done recently by Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough on the “Dimensions and Perspectives of Gratitude” found that thankfulness is the “Forgotten Factor” in happiness.

Here are some of the highlights of what they discovered:

1. In an experimental comparison, those who kept gratitude journals on a weekly basis exercised more regularly, reported fewer physical symptoms, felt better about their lives as a whole, and were more optimistic.
2. Participants who kept gratitude lists were more likely to have made progress toward important goals.

3. A daily gratitude intervention (self-guided exercises) resulted in higher reported levels of alertness, enthusiasm, determination and energy.
4. Participants were more likely to report having helped someone with a personal problem or having offered emotional support to another.
5. In a sample of adults with neuromuscular disease, gratitude resulted in greater amounts of high energy positive moods, a greater sense of feeling connected to others, more optimistic ratings of one's life, and better sleep duration and sleep quality, relative to a control group.
6. Children who practice grateful thinking have more positive attitudes toward school and their family.
7. Grateful people report higher levels of life satisfaction, vitality and optimism, and lower levels of depression and stress.

Here's what you can do: *The research makes it clear—Gratitude increases your happiness and your effectiveness in almost everything you do. So choose to be more grateful, more often!*

A leading question

How can I help my people enjoy their work more, Joel?

Question to you: What makes YOU enjoy your work more?

If you're like most people, you enjoy doing things you're good at. Ever notice that? What you like to do, you're good at, and what you don't like to do, you're not good at. It's the same with your employees and associates.

Of course, the best way to make sure your associates are good at their work is to show them what to do and how to do it. Your personal example is important here. And you should always INSpect what you EXpect, so you can offer positive reinforcement. If your associates don't know what to do and how to do it, they'll be frustrated, and if they're frustrated, they certainly can't enjoy their work.

You probably also enjoy your work when it's interesting. Again, it's the same with your associates. They'll enjoy their work if it's interesting. And they will find it interesting when they're involved. So ask them for ideas and suggestions. Whenever possible, put these ideas into action. If you don't use an idea, explain why. Instead of just making arbitrary decisions, listen to those who will be affected by the decisions. Your associates will remain interested as long as they feel they have some control over their destiny within their work experience.

You can also keep your associates interested by varying their work. Occasionally, give them tasks which aren't part of their job descriptions. For example, if visiting dignitaries are coming into town, have one of your associates pick them up at the airport. Let your associates be exposed to some of these important individuals. You might send your associates to special seminars and meetings as your representative, and then ask for a report.



Finally, you probably enjoy your work most when it's fun. So do your associates! Not that everything during work hours should be fun and games, but people sometimes question the value of work. More than ever we need to manage and motivate others effectively. And effective leadership instills desire, not fear, in people. Desire for challenge, desire for advancement, desire to do a good job — these are all powerful motivators. The opposite of desire is fear, but frightened people rarely learn to think for themselves. They avoid risks and challenges, and stick with the familiar rather than develop new and better ways. Autocrats rule by inducing fear and anxiety. Outstanding leaders motivate through desire. So create an atmosphere conducive to *desire*.

Here's what you can do:

1. *As you think of more ideas on how to help your associates enjoy their work, why not ask them the same question? Perhaps they'll have some valuable suggestions. You can talk with them in person, or you might give them evaluation/feedback forms which they can turn in anonymously. After all, who would know more about making their jobs more enjoyable than your associates themselves?*
2. *Encourage questions and independent thinking.*
3. *Recognize and reward your associates for excellent work — especially innovative work.*



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