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6 Steps to Shape Your Reputation as a Leader

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Share Plenty of managers jump into their roles, multi-tasking, making decisions, and keeping their teams running without giving much thought to how they're leading and how others see them.

But when you deliberately determine what you'd like to be known for as a leader, you'll have a desired outcome to work toward and be able to prioritize the actions most likely to help you get the results you want in your work and your career.

As you go through the steps below, write out your answers using our worksheet [Developing your reputation as a leader](#).

1. Write down the leadership attributes you want to embody and project.

Do you want to be known for being results-oriented, for being strategic and

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something else entirely?

To narrow down your ideas, ask yourself questions like:

- **What do you already do well?** Sometimes it's hard for people to see their strengths because they take them for granted. If you can't easily name one or two of your strengths, then consider: What do you tend to get recognition for? Try listening to the words that others use when they give you feedback on your style or performance. Any patterns emerge?
- **What motivates you at work?** You'll want to incorporate this into your reputation so your everyday efforts feel energizing and fulfilling. For more, see [Write down what drives you at work to remind you of your own motivators](#).
- **What do you want to accomplish in your career?** And what skills will you need in order to get where you want to go? Even if they're weaknesses now, focusing on them can set you up for future success. For example, if you want to become an executive but are a weak verbal communicator, you might determine that you'd like to be known as persuasive.
- **What do you respect about successful leaders around you now or in the past?** It can be difficult to pick qualities like "inclusive" or "collaborative" out of thin air. So start with the specific actions that these leaders take, e.g., he makes sure to greet everyone when they

arrive in the morning, or she always asks for my input before making decisions that affect my work.

- **What does your team and organization need most, now and for the foreseeable future?** If you're not sure, ask your manager, peers, and

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2. Use what you've jotted down to create a **personal mission statement**.

From what you've learned about your own strengths, passions, and goals, and the traits you admire in others, decide what you want to be known for as a leader. Focus in on one or two key aspects that excite you most, will help you get where you want to go in your career, and align with what your team and organization needs.

Try to keep your statement short and simple, much like a mission statement. For example: "I want to be known as a supportive manager who effectively develops future company leaders."

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3. List the actions you'll need to take in order to fulfill your **personal statement**.

When you translate your broad statement into specific, day-to-day actions, you'll paint a clear picture of the kinds of tasks and habits that will lead you to achieve your goal.

Be sure you add enough detail — including who, what, and when — so that it's easy to know whether you're succeeding. For example, if you want to be known for [effectively developing future company leaders](#):

- **Poor:** Coach my direct reports.
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- Check in on direct reports' career goals and development monthly in 1-on-1s.
- Make one stretch assignment to each direct report per quarter and give at least three pieces of feedback related to it per week.
- Institute a policy where direct reports take turns leading our team meetings on a rotating basis, to gain experience in meeting facilitation.
- Add a monthly agenda item to my 1-on-1s with my manager to talk about career paths for my direct reports.

Also, list what [obstacles](#) you're likely to encounter when taking these actions and think through ways to overcome them. For example, what will you do if your team receives a large-volume project that takes up all of their time, but means only mundane work for your more experienced direct reports? Perhaps you could ask experienced team members if they're interested in mentoring less experienced teammates on the project. This way, the experts gain experience in providing guidance while the newbies learn new techniques.

4. Communicate how you want to be seen as a leader to your manager, peers, and team.

When others know your goal, they'll be better equipped to give you feedback on where you're doing well and where you're falling short. They may also be able to give you new ideas to help you succeed.

For example, you might seek input:

- From your direct reports: “I really want to develop future company leaders. What else can I be doing to help you grow in your role or prepare for the next one?”
 - From your manager: “I’d really like to work on my coaching skills so I can
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[about a learning goal in your next 1-on-1.](#)

Also, sharing your desired reputation can help people learn more about your style and priorities quickly, almost like providing operating instructions that can help others understand your expectations and work with you more effectively. One manager we know hands out a sheet called “What it’s like to work with Megan” to new team members as part of her onboarding process. Try writing out phrases like, “If you’re on my team, you can expect _____.”

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5. Align your online profiles and how you introduce yourself with your personal statement.

Job candidates, colleagues, clients, and others are bound to seek you out online. You also probably introduce yourself a certain way in client meetings and at professional events. Do the messages you’re sending out – both online and in-person – align with the personal statement you’re trying to make as a leader?

If not, make updates. For example, your online profiles might emphasize your former employers, job duties, and educational background. But if there’s nothing there to reflect your personal statement – say, your commitment to developing direct reports – then add something about it to your summary or list of achievements. Or ask direct reports you’ve helped in the past (not just former

bosses) to write recommendations. Think about the message your photo sends, too.

In terms of how you typically introduce yourself, instead of a generic statement, like, "I'm a customer success manager at Company X and have been there three

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6. Set reminders to reflect on your progress or changes you'd like to make.

The best professional narrative in the world won't resonate and take hold if you don't actually follow through on it. It's critical that you pause to reflect on how you're doing. So be sure to periodically look up from your day-to-day work to assess yourself. Mark your calendar at an appropriate time frame, perhaps quarterly, and ask yourself questions like:

- What have I done or accomplished that's in line with my desired leadership reputation?
- What more can I do going forward to cement my desired reputation?
- What have I been spending time on that runs counter to my desired reputation? How can I do less of that going forward?
- Is my leadership reputation still aligned with what I want to accomplish and/or what my company needs? If not, how should it change?

Keep in mind that your personal mission will change over time as you build new skills and advance in your career, as your team changes, or as your company's circumstances and priorities change.

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