



Liz on Leadership

The Five Advisors Every Leader Needs

Leadership can be a lonely job. Despite having dozens, hundreds, even thousands of people who look up to you, chances are, you feel isolated more often than you'd like to admit.

The people who work for you may be reluctant to engage you in friendly conversation or they may hesitate to provide you with valuable feedback on how you are doing as a leader.

Beyond that, you may be reluctant to open up to your boss or peers, concerned that you will come across as indecisive, insecure or weak. As a result, you sometimes find yourself feeling unsupported and uncertain, making important decisions without sufficient input or support.

The simple truth is, to be a great leader, you can't go it alone. Instead you must surround yourself with people who will pressure-test your decisions, provide divergent points of view, support you on tough calls, and champion your vision across the organization.

Here are five kinds of advisors who will help you thrive as a leader:

1. **Wise mentors.** These are people who know the organization, are politically savvy, and can help you lead in the face of complexity. While your manager can serve as a mentor, it is important to enlist mentors who don't have direct control over your next performance evaluation.

2. **Trusted peers.** These are the colleagues who sit beside you on your

boss's leadership team. They may run another function, region or business unit. Or they may sit outside the company but participate with you in industry events or leadership roundtables. Be sure to identify peer advisors whose opinion you respect and who are invested in helping you succeed.

3. **Your direct reports.** A good leader is unafraid to ask his or her team for suggestions, feedback, and potential solutions. You've taken the time to hire a smart, talented group of leaders. Use them to help you make stellar decisions and work through challenges.
4. **An exceptional leadership advisor or coach.** There was a time when leaders worked with coaches because they were struggling or on the verge of failure. That's never been a great use of organizational dollars. The best investment a company can make is in helping its top executives and rising stars to get even better, faster. The fact is, as a successful leader, you have many strengths upon which to build. By working with a top-tier executive advisor, you invest in yourself, your team, your company, and your clients.
5. **Yourself.** While it is valuable to have an array of advisors to help you excel as a leader and thrive as a person, don't underestimate your ability to step back and thoughtfully reflect on the decisions you make, the style you bring, your talents, passions, strengths, and gaps. I advise my clients to step out of the busyness of their roles and build in time for strategic pauses. This gives them space to consider their approach and become their own thoughtful advisor.

Great leaders know, it's neither a luxury nor an indulgence to turn to others for advice and support, as they attend to the incredibly demanding and rewarding work of running an organization. So, have you got your own five advisors? There's no time like the present to engage the right people to accelerate your leadership impact and personal success.

Did you miss my last newsletter?

Onboarding Lessons from College Orientation

Last week, I attended college orientation with my daughter. As students and parents gathered in the auditorium, she sat alongside hundreds of other eager freshmen while I situated myself among the parents. To kick off the event, the Dean of Student Life addressed the room. As she spoke to students and their families, I couldn't help but observe the many parallels between welcoming students to college life and onboarding new employees.

The dean launched her presentation by explaining to us that her job is to "engage, develop, and retain" the students—much as it is a leader's job to engage, develop, and retain new hires. She provided context and set expectations for the students and their families. And she conveyed her genuine delight at welcoming the incoming class.

Here are some of the dean's key messages, tailored just enough to help you set the stage for a rapid and successful integration of your new employees.

1. **We are glad to have you.** This simple but important message will help your

new hires feel welcome and engaged from day one. Don't neglect to let people know how pleased you are to have them onboard.

2. **We are here to support you.** It doesn't matter how experienced, accomplished, or mature your new hires may be. If they are new to the team (and particularly if they are new to the company), they will need your generous support, guidance and sufficient resources to be successful.
3. **If you work hard, you will succeed.** This may seem obvious but there must be a clear and overt understanding between employer and employee: Give us your best and your efforts will be recognized and rewarded.
4. **We expect you to take risks.** New hires may be particularly cautious about introducing new ideas or taking unfamiliar approaches. But risk is a requirement for meaningful innovation and growth. Make it clear to all that risk-taking is both welcome and expected.
5. **We want you to ask questions.** Be sure your new employees understand they aren't expected to have all the answers. To ensure they feel comfortable asking questions, connect them with a peer or mentor who can help them navigate the organization and offer sage advice on how to most effectively work with the new boss.

The fact is, past success is a predictor of future success—but only under the right conditions. Even the smartest and most experienced new employees need context, clarity, direction, and support. So why leave them to sink or swim?

Remember the dean's welcome and make it standard practice. Because, like her, you've got a responsibility to actively engage, develop, and retain the new kids in town.

Dr. Liz on Leadership: New Column and Special Offer

For more leadership advice from Dr. Liz, check out my new digital monthly column, exclusively in Life Science Leader!

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About Dr. Liz

Dr. Liz Bywater has been called a one-of-a-kind leadership expert. Working at the intersection of business and psychology, she brings together pragmatic experience, advising top executives across the Fortune 500, with an advanced degree in Psychology and a dynamic personal style to inspire, engage and counsel her clients.

For more than a decade, top global organizations have requested Liz's help in resolving issues such as creating extraordinary client relationships, increasing market persuasion, and driving productive collaborations in an increasingly complex world.

Liz advises senior leaders at some of the world's most successful companies, including Johnson & Johnson, Nike, Thomson Reuters, Bristol-Myers Squibb, AmerisourceBergen and more. She uses her expertise in human behavior to drive commercial success. She helps her clients propel innovation, exert influence and lead their organizations through change.

A thought leader in organizational excellence, Liz provides expert commentary for such publications as the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Fast Company and USA Today. She is on the editorial advisory board for *Life Science Leader* magazine and is a featured expert on such radio broadcasts as CBS Philadelphia's *Philadelphia Agenda* with Brad Segall and *Woman of the Week* with Marilyn Russell.

Liz earned her PhD in Psychology at the Derner Institute for Advanced Psychological Studies at Adelphi University. Her undergraduate degree is from Cornell University, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Cum Laude. She is a longstanding member of the American Psychological Association and the Society for the Advancement of Consulting. She lives in scenic Bucks County, PA, with her husband and two teenage children. Stay tuned for Liz's forthcoming book, *Slow Down to Speed Up!* (Business Expert Press, Fall 2017).

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