

Leadership Wired

Leadership in Dependence: An Attitude Inspiring Gratitude

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When I began my journey as a leader, I honed in on my goals and pushed hard to achieve them. Before long, I reached a painfully obvious conclusion. When I tried to make things happen on my own, my accomplishments ended up being incredibly insignificant. As it turns out, self-made people don't make much of an impact.

You won't be successful as a leader unless a lot of people want you to be. No matter what level of talent you possess, you're dependent on others for success. As a leader, your influence derives from an awareness of your dependence and a willingness to express thanks to those whom you rely upon for help. In their book, *Laws of Lifetime Growth* Dan Sullivan and Catherine Nomura, write about the connection between gratitude and influence:

“Only a small percentage of people are continually successful over the long run. These outstanding few recognize that every success comes through the assistance of many other people—and they are continually grateful for this support. Conversely, many people whose success stops at some point are in that position because they have cut themselves off from everyone who has helped them. They view themselves as the sole source of their achievements. As they become more self-centered and isolated, they lose their creativity and ability to succeed.”

Broadly speaking, three categories of people have lifted me to success.

1) Some people helped me that never knew me.

Some people have deposited their thoughts into my mind through the books they have written. Others have influenced me on account of the lives they have authored. These leaders, like Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King, Jr., have inscribed leadership lessons on the pages of history for all to read.

(2) Some people knew me but never knew they helped me.

These individuals modeled success principles for me that I could apply to my life. I watched them and caught from them things that add value to my life today. I am filled with joy whenever I am able to express my gratitude to these unintentional mentors.

3) Some people know me and know they help me.

These friends have been intentional in their assistance. Most of the good things that have happened to me are a direct result of their commitment to add value to my life. The people who have helped me the most include:

Gift Complementors: These people do things I am not gifted to do.

Creative Thinkers: These people solve problems and give me options.

Door Closers: These people complete assignments with excellence.

People Developers: These people multiply my influence by training other leaders.

Mind Stretchers: These people expand my thinking and my spirit.

Networkers: These people connect me to relationships that enhance my life.

As a leader, my visions have always been bigger than my ability, leaving me with two options: give up or get help. I've leaned heavily on others in making my dreams a reality. As a Chinese proverb says: "Behind an able person are always other able people." That adage certainly has been true in my life.

Success is compounded when others join our cause. Followers make leaders possible. In turn, great followers make great leaders. Understanding this lesson inspires a leader to be grateful. I'd like to give a big "Thank you" to the people whom I've depended upon for success as a leader.

Application:

The English word "thanks" actually comes from the same root word as "think." Yet oftentimes we are not mindful of the many mentors and supporters who have assisted our leadership journey. Maybe if we were more "Thinkful" we would be more "Thankful." Carve out 20 minutes to think about three people responsible for your success. Jot each of them a note expressing your gratitude for the ways in which they have benefited your life.