Leadership makes us PROUD

an article by Sarah Auerbach, PhD

Leadership comes with great responsibility. The way we lead is not only important for ourselves, our performance, and our wellbeing, but also for the engagement, productivity, and health of our employees as well as the performance of the organization. papilio developed a state-of-the-art, competency-based leadership model – the PROUD leadership compass – which includes five key elements of successful leadership. In our Leadership Academy, we offer a training for first-time leaders which provides individuals with the knowledge, competencies and tools needed to effectively lead and manage themselves, their employees, and the organization.

The papilio PROUD leadership compass

There is a growing body of scientific research that seeks to understand the underlying mechanisms and principles of leadership, and how leaders' behavior impacts the performance, motivation, and job satisfaction of their employees (e.g., Ding & Yu, 2022, Yan et al., 2021, Kelloway et al., 2013)[i]. In recent years, principles of Positive Leadership[ii] came more into focus. This concept focuses on creating a flourishing work environment, promoting employee engagement, and achieving organizational goals in an ethical and effective way. Positive leaders create a sense of trust and loyalty among employees, and they inspire and motivate their team to achieve their full potential. They also have a clear vision, communicate it effectively to the team and align their efforts towards it. Positive leaders create an environment that allows for open and honest communication, they actively listen to their employees and encourage them to contribute their ideas.

The evidence-based PROUD leadership compass by papilio comprises five key elements that are associated with positive outcomes for both employees and organizations, such as increased employee engagement, commitment, job satisfaction, higher individual and organizational performance, innovation, and ethical behavior.

The five key elements

- **P**urpose: Leaders who shape and convey purpose to their employees show a sense of direction and meaning that guides the team's actions and decisions.
- **R**elationships: Leaders can build sustainable relationships with employees and stakeholders in a variety of ways including effective communication, forming trust and psychological safety, and showing appreciation.
- **O**utcome-oriented leaders support their employees in successfully progressing on or completing a task or objective. Furthermore, they don't forget to acknowledge and celebrate an important achievement of their employees or team.
- **U**plift refers to the ability of a leader to raise the spirits of their team or organization thus fostering a positive and supportive team culture.
- **D**edication refers to the quality of being fully committed and devoted to a task, goal, or cause. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi[iii] described it as flow, "a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it." Leaders who foster flow in their team, increase employee engagement and motivation, resulting in better performance and results.
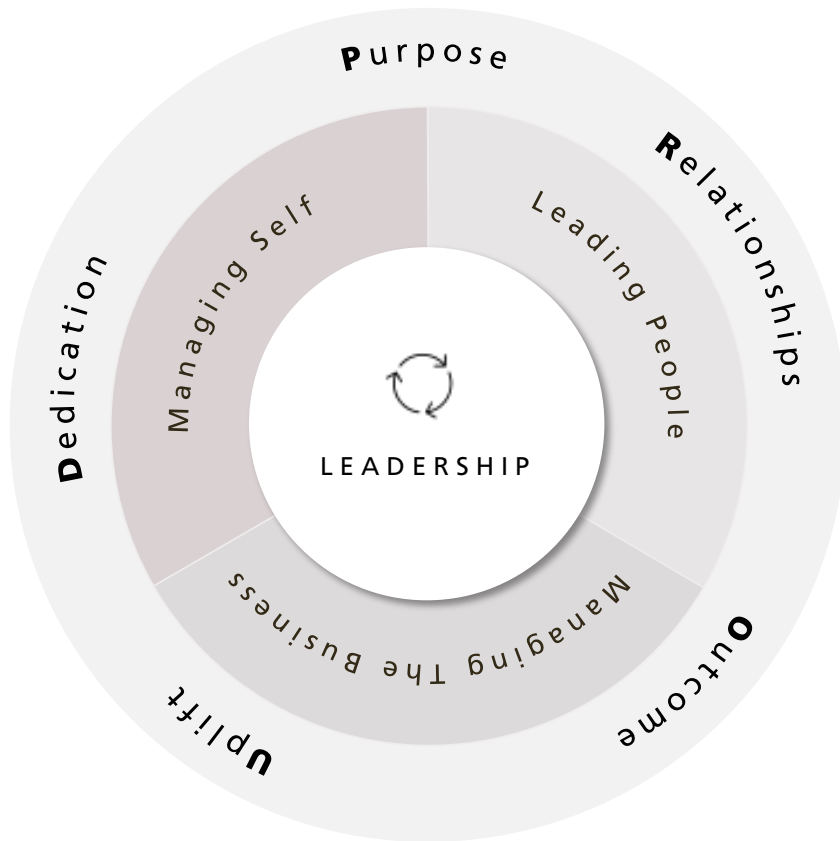
Why is leadership training important?

Leadership can be trained. Usually, it is not something that individuals are born with. Rather, leadership competencies can be developed and refined through training and experience. Leadership training provides individuals with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively lead and manage themselves, other people, and the organization. Additionally, leadership training can help individuals understand and navigate organizational dynamics and culture, and how to build and lead effective teams. In addition to training, real-world experience and ongoing self-reflection and learning are necessary to develop and improve one's leadership competencies. Leadership development is an ongoing process, and even experienced leaders can benefit from ongoing training and development to stay current and continue to improve their skills.

Our papilio Leadership Basic training helps first-time leaders to successfully arrive at their new position and shape their new role(s) and responsibilities in accordance with their strengths and development potentialities as well as the requirements of the organization. It can also serve as a refresher for experienced managers who would like to reflect on their leadership skills and competencies. Within an innovative blended learning setting, participants engage in self-learning activities, an online assessment of their leadership competencies, a 2½ day classroom training and an individual development session.

The need? Practical, useful leadership tools

Especially first-time leaders are often in need of simple, effective tools that they can use in their daily interactions with employees as well as their recurring management tasks such as performance and talent management. Some examples of positive leadership tools include:

– Team building: Encouraging collaboration, teamwork, and a positive and supportive team culture.
– Strength-based empowerment: Giving team members the autonomy, resources, and support they need to take ownership of their work and apply their signature strengths.
– Communication: Encouraging and modelling open and honest communication, giving positive feedback, active listening.
– Irritation: Asking surprising questions to foster self-reflection and help employees finding their solution.

Your contact:

Sarah Auerbach

Senior Consultant | PhD & Dipl. Psych.

sarah.auerbach@papilio.ch

+41 44 380 22 44

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