Welcome To

The Wake
The Wake: Los Angeles, CA

In this episode of Leadership University we’re going to explore:

How a leader’s character is defined by his/her ability to:

• Connect authentically (which leads to trust)
• Be oriented toward the truth (which leads to finding reality and operating within it)
• Work in a way that gets results and finishes well (which leads to reaching goals, profits, or the mission)
• Embrace, engage, and deal with the negative (which leads to ending problems, resolving them, or transforming them)
• Be oriented toward growth (which leads to an open perspective)
• Be transcendent (which leads to expansion of the bigger picture and of oneself)

The effect a leader’s “Wake” leaves on his team-members in:

• Results: What did he/she accomplish?
• Relationships: How did he/she deal with people?

Understanding the consequences of his/her own wake through conversations with two team-members and with a mentor
Timeline

Your work in this chapter will take approximately three cumulative hours to complete. Plan to spend about an hour watching the videos and completing the online activities. Toward the end of the online activities, you’ll be asked to schedule two, 45-minute, in-person meetings each with a colleague of your choosing and then you’ll summarize their feedback online. You will also be asked to speak with a mentor for about 15 minutes.
“Feedback is the breakfast of champions.”
- Ken Blanchard, Renowned Business Consultant
Video: Intro
Three Things Successful Leaders Have In Common

Successful leaders are good at something. They are competent people. However, there are a lot of people who are good at something who don’t become successful.

Successful leaders take what they do well and build alliances to support it. However, there are many smart and well-networked people who do not become successful.

Successful leaders have character. They make their competencies and networks come to fruition.
What is character?

It’s not just the morals and ethics. A five-year-old child knows not to lie, cheat or steal, but that knowledge doesn’t necessarily qualify him/her to lead a company.
Character Is The Ability To Meet The Demands Of Reality

In business and in all of life, demands come across one’s path. And just as the “character” of the metal determines whether an airplane is going to succeed in flight, a person’s character determines whether he or she will succeed as a leader. Their makeup, their integrity, will either be able to deliver or not. They will meet the demand and succeed, only if their character can meet that demand.

Think about some challenges that have come up in your recent projects. Define the attributes of your character that helped you to be successful in navigating through those challenges.
A “Force” To Be Reckoned With

One of the words that is close to character in meaning is the Hebrew word that translates to “virtue.” If you trace its origins, one of the meanings is a “force.” Someone of virtue is a force, and a force always leaves a consequence. When a hurricane comes through a town, you can see the consequence of its force. Likewise, when you move through life, through your company or organization, through your career, and through your relationships, your character is going to be a “force.” The question is, “What kind of force is it going to be?” Will it be one of virtue, where you deliver the goods? When you bring energy and force of character to a goal or a project, will the force bear fruit? In many ways, as we shall see, it is up to you.
Character Is Defined By Your Ability To:

• Connect authentically (which leads to trust)
• Be oriented toward the truth (which leads to finding reality and operating within it)
• Work in a way that gets results and finishes well (which leads to reaching goals, profits, or the mission)
• Embrace, engage, and deal with the negative (which leads to ending problems, resolving them, or transforming them)
• Be oriented toward growth (which leads to an open perspective)
• Be transcendent (which leads to expansion of the bigger picture and of oneself)
• Referring to this definition above, list some aspects of your character that you consider to be the strongest and some aspects of character you’d like to work on:
Character Can Change And Grow

That is the exciting part. The things that have held you back thus far do not have to continue to be your downfall. Once you can see what they are, you can change them.
Video: The Force
Every Boat Leaves A Wake

You can tell a lot about a ship as you look at its wake. If it is in a straight line, you get a feeling that the boat is steadily on course, and that the captain is not dozing at the wheel. But if it is wavering, you begin to wonder. Also, if it is smooth and flat, you know something about the speed of the boat, and if it is steep, you can tell something about its drag. In other words, what the wake looks like can tell you a lot about the how the boat is functioning.
Leadership Leaves A Wake

Great leaders are like a force that leave a balanced wake behind them.

Think about the wake your leadership could be leaving behind. What does it look like? Is it straight and on course or wavering and lost? Why do you think your wake looks that way?

And just as with a boat, there are always two sides to the wake that a leader creates when moving through an organization.
Video: The Leader’s Wake
The Wake Has Two Sides

When a person moves through an organization, he/she leaves a “wake” behind in these two areas...

Results: What did he/she accomplish? Relationships: How did he/she deal with people?
Results

In terms of the results, what does the wake look like? Is it a wake of goals being reached? Profits being made? Growth of the business or the deal that the person was working on with you? The mission being accomplished? Things getting completed? New ways of doing things being introduced and perfected? A stronger brand? A stronger reputation for the work and company? Better systems and processes? Cleaner operations?

At the end of the day, we must look back and see if the wake of our work is profitable or not. If it isn’t, it is time to ask ourselves some hard questions. The wake is the results we leave behind. And the wake doesn’t lie and it doesn’t care about excuses. It is what it is.
Relationships

On the relationships side, just as in the results side, there are consequences. Are people more trusting after working with you? Are they more fulfilled? Have they grown as a result of being associated with you? Do they feel better about themselves and working with others? Did they learn from you and feel encouraged?

Just as we leave the effects of our work behind in results, we leave the effects of our interactions with people behind in their hearts, minds, and souls. Sometimes the workplace isn't the most fun place to be. Problems will pop up and people will be stressed. However, it is your job as a leader to empower your team and help tackle those challenges in a positive and healthy way.
And The Big Question Is:

“Would they want to do it again?”

Think of a recent project you’ve finished and a team-member who worked on it. If you asked him/her if he/she would want to do the same project again, under your leadership, what do you think he/she would say?

Why?
Video: Balanced Wake
Quick Exercise

Grab a pen and a piece of scratch paper.

At the top of the page, draw an outline of a boat that’s about the diameter of coffee mug.

Draw two parallel lines from the boat down to the bottom of the page.

On the lower left corner of the page write: Results

On the lower right corner of the page write: Relationships
Quick Exercise Continued

Now, think of a former boss. It can be one that you’ve had in this organization or one from as far back as your first job in high school.

Write that boss’ name in the middle of the boat.

Look at that name. What memories flash into your mind? What feelings are percolating in your heart?
Quick Exercise Continued

Think about how they led you on the results side and the relationships side. Jot down a few notes on the respective sides of the boat.

Summarize those notes:
Quick Exercise Continued

What was it like to be on the other side of that person?
A Look Back & A Look Ahead...

I hope your take-away from this exercise is that how you lead directly affects the relationships and performance of your team. So, now you must look out over the transom and ask yourself, “What does my wake look like? Are a lot of people out there water-skiing on the wake, smiling, having a great time because I moved through their lives? Or are they out there bobbing for air, bleeding, and left wounded as shark bait?”
In Other Words

Would they say that their experience with you has left them better off or would they say that it has left them worse off? Did they consider it a blessing that they were associated with you, or a curse? What is the nature of the wake? Are they smiling or reeling?

What do you think your team would say about living in your wake?
If You Want To Leave The Best Wake Possible...

Leave behind a trail of people who have experienced your being “for them.” I heard a man describe his boss one time this way: “She was a tough one, but I always felt she wanted me to do well. She wanted me to win, even when she was hard on me.” People of grace leave others better off than how they found them, even when they were getting nothing in return.
Video: Your Wake
What Does Your Wake Look Like?

Now you’re going to climb out of that dinghy and find out what it feels like to be out there on the wake.
Identify Stakeholders

Think of two people who work with you. Let’s say one person is a peer and the other reports directly to you. The people you choose should have a stake in your performance. Perhaps you feel you’re leading these people well, or perhaps you feel like you’re struggling to lead them. Ask each of them (separately) to a lunch or coffee meeting with you this week in a comfortable setting. The plan is to have the meal and then chat for about 45 minutes. Tell them you’re enrolled in Leadership University and you want to talk about it with them and hear their feedback. You want to know, "What is it like to be on the other side of me?"
To Prepare For These Meetings...

You must be in a growth mindset, as identified by world-renowned psychologist Dr. Carol Dweck: “In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point.” If you want to improve as a leader, you need be open to feedback. Your role in these interviews is to learn, not to dispute.

Note that we tend to judge ourselves on our intentions and others judge us on our behaviors. It may be that some of the actions we do in trying to be helpful are actually harmful. Your goal is to get out of your skin and into that of another person, to see yourself through their eyes. Some things that you were taking for granted are going to mean the world to the other person.

Sitting down with the person shows that you care. You’re modeling for them what it looks like to humble yourself and say, “I know I can improve. I need your help.” It’s great leadership to show that change begins with you.
Before You Sit Down With Your Team-Member, Check Your Attitude And Remember To...

Be positive. Laugh at yourself. Keep it casual.

Instead of interrupting or making judgements, ask clarifying questions like: “What am I doing that makes you think/feel that way?” “What can I do to make that better?” or “Tell me more about that...”

Open the document on the following page. Read it before your meeting and refer to it during your meeting. Take detailed notes as the person talks.
Stakeholder Interview Sheet

Print and bring to your meetings
Taking It All In

Now is the time to review this feedback. Don’t worry, I’m not going to make you type up all your notes from the meetings, but I will ask you to reflect here a bit.

While reading the feedback from your interviews, don’t get stuck in the frame of: “Am I good or bad?” When we’re in that judgement mode, we’re defensive and deflated and it hinders our ability to grow.

The highest performers are in the learning mode. They are curious and they care about getting better. Like when a high-performing quarterback watches the film of a botched play, he sees that there’s a better way of doing things and he uses that information in the next game.
Looking For Themes

If one person tells you that you’re a horse, you can blow them off. If five people say it, get a saddle. If you’re seeing consistent feedback in certain areas, you should certainly take it seriously.

Were there any elements of the feedback that were consistent between both interviews? Reflect on this.
Looking For Themes

Did you already have an awareness of what you heard or were there surprises? Reflect on this.
Looking For Themes

Was there any feedback that you thought was totally off base? It may not be true, it might just be a perception. But what does that perception say about your relationship with that person? What might you need to do to correct this misconception?
Looking For Themes

Which elements of this feedback made you want to take immediate action?
Next Steps: Report Findings To Mentor

We find that when people are interested in how we’re growing, and we invite them into that reflective space, that we can internalize their viewpoints. It decreases anxiety, makes you feel comfortable with growth and mitigates against all that judgement.

What were some of your mentor’s thoughts on the feedback? Did he/she agree with the findings?
Next Steps: Go To Your Mentor And Report Your Findings

What advice does he/she have to help you improve?
Next Steps: Go To Your Mentor And Report Your Findings

Did you have particular struggles in completing the previous activities with your team-members or mentor? Please explain. Did you have particular struggles in completing the previous activities with your team-members or mentor? Please explain.
Ask Yourself

What do I need to do to improve? Get specific. How will I behave differently?

For example: I’m going to be a better active listener. Instead of jumping in with my two-cents the moment a person finishes speaking, I’m going to summarize what he/she has said to make certain I’ve understood it.
Create An Action Plan

Think about it in this way: “I want to learn more about X. What do great leaders do to listen (or meet deadlines, etc.)?"

Some ideas for this include:

Think about a friend or mentor who does well in that area. Ask them about their strategies for success. Read a book or article related to that topic.

Ask the person who gave you the feedback to keep tabs on your progress. Tell them you’re trying to improve and ask them to observe your efforts. Tell them that you’re going to check in with them on a regular basis (during a regularly scheduled monthly one-on-one meeting, for example). What suggestions does he/she have? Ask yourself where you’d like to go with this issue. Get more help if you need it.

List some steps of your Action Plan.

When you’ve been assured by your stakeholders that real progress has been made. You can move on to the next issue.
Congratulate Yourself

You’ve done what only great performers do: You’ve sought feedback, you’ve reflected on it, and you’ve taken steps to improve your behavior. Great job!
Video: Outro