

# Student Leadership Strategies

*21 Easy Ways to Become a Center  
of Influence In Your Group*

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# An Excellent Leader

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## Helps Team Members Feel Welcome

At one time or another, all of us have either moved to a new town, transferred or enrolled in a new school, or joined an organization for the first time. Some of us are very good at “jumping in” and getting involved with our new surroundings right away. Others of us may have a more difficult time and end up sitting on the sidelines.

Regardless of which of the two groups we tend to belong to, I believe all of us have something worthwhile to contribute to any organization. The most effective leaders are usually the ones who make everyone in the group feel like they belong and have something to offer.

When I have joined a new group for the first time, there have been times where it has been very easy for me to be the first to introduce myself, but there have also other times where it has been difficult. I can give a couple of reasons why, and for those who wish to be a leader in any group, these are very important:

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1. Everyone in the group already seems to know each other. When our team members have been around each other for a long time, they can get very comfortable with one another. They may not intentionally slight a new person, but the path of least resistance is to keep everything as it already is. To be an effective leader, we need to be willing to reach out and include others.
2. Fearing the unknown can be human nature. We tend to constantly evaluate whether or not we will fit in, or perhaps whether or not we want to be part of the group. Doing anything new naturally takes us out of our comfort zones. Resolve to be the first to start a conversation with someone you don't know. Discover their interests, hobbies, talents, dreams or goals—then remember them! Few things impress me more than people who remember things I have shared with them, especially if I still don't know them very well.

Certified Master Results Coach Sean Smith says something about leadership that I believe is profound:

Leadership is nothing more than helping other people feel good about themselves.

That is exactly why making others feel welcome in your presence is essential to your success as a leader.

## Action Steps:

1. Resolve to be the first to speak to new people. Have a spirit of wanting to know the other person in terms of the goals, talents, or aspirations or background. It's a great way to show someone you care.
2. Make a sincere effort to make everyone you meet feel important somehow. You never know if there will be mutual opportunities to benefit from one another in the future.



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## Acts Decisively

Making decisions is a very important part of being an excellent leader; however, the very best leaders gather enough information and then make their decisions quickly. Some leaders tend to decide what is best for their group without gathering enough information—or perhaps without gathering the right information. Others tend to stay stuck in “information gathering” mode, and as a result never really make a decision at all. Acting decisively is an important trait to have whether you are leading a group, yourself, or perhaps a team in a business at some point in the future.

Sometimes when we make choices for ourselves or our team, we have to guard against not gathering enough information to make an informed choice. One very common mistake people make is to be closed-minded. In other words, people may look only for information that supports what they have already decided to do. This may manifest itself in making choices for the short-term good instead of the long-term good. When we make choices only to benefit the short term, chances are we are only putting a band-aid on the situation and not really solving a problem.

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Using a personal example, it is also possible to want to take a long time to decide something. Toward the end of my college career, I was considering the idea of going to graduate school. I gathered information from every resource I could think of—I did research and asked people what should factor into my decision.

Six weeks into my search, I was in the office of one of my professors, and he said something I will never forget. He told me that I could continue to gather information for as long as I want, but eventually I will have to decide what I was going to do. He also stated that after I decide, I may learn something later that could have factored into my decision, and I will probably never have all of the information I think I really need. That's why when I make a choice, I shouldn't ever regret it! At that point, I decided I knew all I really needed to know to make my decision. Delaying making the decision was getting stressful, and once I decided to go for it, I felt so much better!

This illustrates a very important point: It is not necessary to know ALL of the contingencies before acting...just know the most important items. Don't be afraid of making a wrong choice for yourself or your team. Chances are we will all make choices we wish we could take back, but act boldly and decisively no matter what. The more opportunities you have

to exercise your decision making abilities, the better you will become at it.

In his book, “The Success Principles: How to Get From Where You Are to Where You Want to Be”, Jack Canfield discusses the idea of “Ready, Fire, Aim”. Too often when people are faced with a decision, they want conditions to be just right before taking action, or they want to know what all of the possible outcomes might be. Canfield advises that we just get started, make that decision, take that action! He says it is like firing an arrow at a target. If it misses, you can adjust your aim until you get closer to your objective.

## Action Steps:

1. The best leaders make decisions by gathering just enough information to get started, and then acting quickly. They don't get bogged down with so much information that they can't decide at all.
2. Use the principle of "Ready, Fire, Aim". The best leaders are action-oriented. Just get started, and adjust your aim as you go. Eventually, you will accomplish exactly what you set out to do if you consistently act.

