

The Five Elements of Effective Leadership

BY RICK MILLER



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You may not realize it, but every person on your team at every level of your organization has the potential to be a Chief.

By that I mean that each has the potential to be a more effective leader, and you can make it happen. Let me explain.

Based on 30-plus years of experience as a business leader, I have developed a roadmap that has enabled entire organizations to move from a position of losing market share to a place where record-level productivity and profits occurred right alongside personal development and relationship building—for everyone involved.

You have likely been introduced to, and practiced, a variety of leadership styles, but I'm willing to bet that you haven't considered the critical intersection that exists between the implementation of five key elements: discipline, support, creativity, insight, and values.

These five elements make up what I refer to as the All-In Roadmap. With this roadmap, teams of employees have tripled the growth rate in million- and billion-dollar companies. Here are the five elements:

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is an orderly pattern of behavior that increases the likelihood of a desired outcome. In business, it is the essence of management. Discipline begins with self-discipline. When you are able to adhere to a particular practice, set of parameters, or guidelines, you will effectively inspire others to do the same. There are five main choices when it comes to discipline. A Chief chooses to envision, strategize, plan tactics, implement and measure, and adjust.

You can think of these five choices as the discipline toolbox. Implementing one or more of these choices on a regular basis will help you to be a better Chief. Here's how:

Envision: It is not only the duty of executives to provide the vision for an organization, it is an opportunity for everyone. When you encourage each individual to choose and follow his own personally compelling vision, the energy behind people becomes boundless.

Strategize: Your team will be more effective if you share your strategy—at least part of it—with everyone.

Plan tactics: A Chief understands the critical nature of detailed tactical planning and the role it plays in the probability of a strategy's success. When all members of a team set their own work goals and are encouraged to give input during planning, execution is much more likely to run smoothly.

Implement and measure: Success occurs when you plan the work and work the plan. Quality implementation and careful measurement are the backbone of discipline. They provide shape and direction so that any project can move forward.

Adjust: Change is the only constant. When a Chief recognizes this and creates an environment that nurtures an optimistic perspective about change, then your team members feel comfortable seeking opportunity when change arises rather than recoiling in fear of the repercussions.

SUPPORT

Support is the structure that holds an organization together. It is made up of tangible components such as offices, factories, and all things tech. It is made up of visible components such as the organizational structure, company benefits, and resources. But most of all, it is made up of the interactions—spoken and unspoken—that transpire between people.

These interactions drive the pulse of an organization. Fueled with the proper support, your team can move mountains.

Again, think of these five choices as the support toolbox from which you will utilize the tools you need to build a sound support structure.

Model: The credibility required to build trust and earn respect comes from consistency. As an effective Chief, you will not only “talk the talk” and “walk the walk” but will be the talk and the walk. When you align how you talk with how you feel, think, write, and act—all in alignment with your values—your authenticity will be felt by your entire team.

Inspire: A leader's authenticity, as created by modeling, will also serve to inspire the members of an organization. As an effective Chief, you will choose to inspire others as well as be open to be inspired by them. You will recruit and align people to a cause without relying on positional power, which will serve to better integrate your team as a cohesive whole.

Enable: A great Chief is an enabler, in the best way. As a servant leader, you provide freedom for individuals to exercise new capabilities and to choose to be Chiefs themselves. An organization thrives when people feel empowered and accountable.

Encourage: When you choose to encourage others while also seeking encouragement yourself, you will be able to change the underlying tone in any organization from one of resentment to one of respect. The ripple effect of encouragement has the potential to extend far beyond employees.

Question: An effective leader has a natural curiosity and learns to foster this curiosity in others.

CREATIVITY

Creativity is traditionally defined as it pertains to innovation, but I define creativity in an unconventional manner. I propose that creativity is actually the ability to create, or manifest, the future. There are five main choices when it comes to creativity. Chiefs create the future when they choose to feel, think, speak, write, and act in alignment with who they are. Your creativity toolbox will be used by continually checking to ensure that each of the following choices is made in a consistent manner with the others.

Feel: When you are aware of and attuned to your emotions, you will have access to a strong source of truth. Listening to gut instinct, which is very much a physical and mental feeling, is crucial for the fine-tuning required of a great Chief.

Think: We all think, of course, but when you choose to actively think—that is, to manage your thoughts—not only does your intellect become more organized but you also fuel the energy that will help to create the future. As the saying goes, “Watch your thoughts, they become words. Watch your words, they become actions.”

Speak: As an effective Chief, you can choose your words carefully, acknowledging the energy behind verbal communication and the impact words have on the future being created.

Write: The written word enjoys a greater level of permanence and impression. People have long understood the power of the pen as a creative force to influence others. Writing is the action of bringing together feelings, thoughts, and words in a concentrated and powerful manner. I recommend utilizing this tool to be a more effective leader. Write down your thoughts and your dreams, and write away your fears.

Act: Building on the previous creativity choices, our actions are the culmination of creativity. We are held accountable for our actions more than for any other form of creativity. When you act in alignment with who you are, the ease with which your goals are met will increase along with the quality of your efforts.

INSIGHT

Insight is the understanding that comes from self-awareness. Such powerful insight can be a challenge to discover in a world that appears to move faster and faster each day. The development of insight is key to increasing confidence and effectiveness. Be on the lookout for insight in the simplest experiences in life and from the least expected places.

There are five ways you can learn more about yourself. You can develop the ability to know yourself in a way that you may not have previously considered.

Be present: When you choose to be totally attentive and participate in the moment, the activity you are engaged in will be energized and you will be more effective as a leader. When present, you give 100% of your attention to the people with whom you are engaged. This simple practice can completely transform interactions and relationships.

Be still: When you choose to be still for a certain period of time on a regular basis, you will develop the ability to listen to the voice that matters most—your own. In this noisy and fast-paced world, the ability to be still will help any individual be a Chief.

Be accepting: You have the choice to accept people and situations for who and what they are. In doing so, you can avoid the frustration of trying to change people and change the past. The first step toward acceptance, however, is self-acceptance.

Be generous: When you choose to be generous with your time, possessions, and money, you may find that instead of having less, you have more.

Be grateful: A truly effective Chief will find gratitude not only in moments when everything is going well but also in moments of struggle. The grace required to face tough times and remain thankful is a blessing.

VALUES

Values are the foundation of relationships and of effective leadership. Underlying each choice that an individual makes are his values. When you choose to make evident your own values, all while seeking out the values of other team members and the organization itself, you will become a more effective leader.

I believe that values are a personal choice. Rather than list a set of values for you to follow, I urge you to take some time to choose your own values or reaffirm values you have already in place as a way to deepen your commitment to the driving force behind everything you do—business, personal, or otherwise.

I offer these five elements as a guideline that you can follow, but know that you can implement these elements and their corresponding choices in a way that works best for your unique situation. You may find that you do not need to modify your current discipline habits, for example. I am sharing this roadmap so that you may find an alternate path toward your goal when your current route no longer serves you.

By integrating the five elements of my All-In Roadmap, every individual in an organization can be a Chief, or be a better Chief. It's not about title or level anymore. It's about who we are that drives what we do and how we do it. Helping your team align these elements will unlock their potential and drive growth in and around your organization. ^{MW}

Rick Miller is a confidant, an author, and a speaker who can help you with choices that will unlock your potential and the potential of every Chief in your organization. Miller has spent more than 30 years as a business leader and go-to Chief, serving as president and/or CEO in Fortune 10, Fortune 30, nonprofit, and startup companies. Today, he works with Chiefs at all levels and speaks regularly about a simple, unconventional, research-based roadmap that enables Chiefs to drive next-level growth. More information is available at www.BeingChief.com

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