

# Sharing Your Passion to Improve the Endgame

*Practicing Advanced People Skills*



By Ken Karr

An



Leadership Resource

# Begin at the Beginning.

**D**eveloping people skills is a journey that begins very early in life. At one time you learned basic rules about your personal behavior and how to get along with others. Perhaps it was from Robert Fulghum's book "Everything I need to know I learned in kindergarten," or the Golden Rule, or just to be helpful. These are great rules to live by every day. You've had a good start. MSBCoach's Leadership Maturity Model's "Ground Level Essentials"<sup>1</sup> will provide an excellent refresher and set a firm foundation for advancing your people skills.

Along the way, through school and into the work force, you lived in a leadership crucible of life experiences. You found that you didn't always practice the people skills that you knew to be right. You may have been reactive, impulsive, uneasy and just not thinking about the consequences in the future. There is an important lesson here; think first of how your actions today are likely to impact the future: tomorrow, next week, next year, even ten or more years from now.

---

Easier said than done BUT, you CAN put on your internal brakes when you sense an urge to react. Stephen Covey covered this well in the chapter “Seek First to Understand, then to be Understood” in his book “The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People”<sup>2</sup>. NOTE: Covey uses the term “Habit” for a very important reason; we are all given to impulses that can seriously impair our effectiveness unless we HABITUALLY react to overcome them and that takes PRACTICE. The MSBCoach Maturity Model<sup>3</sup> covers will help you hone you skills these phases of leadership acumen.

Now you are, or soon will be, in an important senior leadership position working with top professionals with far ranging expertise and extensive life and leadership experience, all likely to be very different than yours. You are nearing the summit of your profession and called upon to exhibit exceptional leadership acumen and advanced people skills. How do you lead, motivate and influence others? How can you become more open minded and flexible, more approachable, and welcome collaboration?

# The Prerequisites.

## ● Goals and Values

People skills in a work place absent clearly defined and shared (“our”) goals and values will not set you and your organization on a path to success. Values set the boundaries of personal behavior such as safety, ethics, excellence, teamwork and goals set a common set of objectives for your team to accomplish. If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll end up somewhere else (Yogi). To even begin to exercise advanced people skills, you must embrace and live “our” values and clearly communicate “our” goals with the conviction that they can and will be achieved. To do this and inspire enthusiastic buy-in requires very effective people skills. Here are some, by no means all, key people skills you should proficiently employ daily.

## ● Confidence

People are very astute. They can tell if you are confident that “we” can achieve “our” challenging goals. Therefore, when you are rallying them they must sense that you know they can be met and that you are confident that “our” team can do it! They will quickly sense whether you are unsure or not committed, and if you are not, they are not likely to follow with commitment and enthusiasm. If so, you and your team are unlikely to be as successful as you could.

## ● Buy-in

“It’s Always About People.”<sup>4</sup> You might be confident that the team can achieve very challenging objectives but you cannot assume, that because you do, everyone else does too. How do you achieve this? First, thoughtful interactive listening and meaningful discussion are essential. Abraham Lincoln<sup>5</sup> was open minded and flexible. He had honed his listening skills so that within a few minutes, he knew what was said but more importantly, he knew what was meant, not always the same thing. This talent is essential to exercising advanced people skills. You should go among the team, to their work places, be accessible, avoid the “Ivory Tower.” One of my favorite CEOs would present an annual “empty chair award” to the executive or senior manager who was out of the office and among the “troops” the most. Win that award! Frequent and personal interaction with as many as you can keeps you in touch and lets everyone know you care about them. If you are uplifting, optimistic and interested, your people will return the favor with thoughtful ideas and suggestions to help the team succeed. Your caring and deep commitment are the sinew of teamwork.

---

## ● Recognition

It's not about you! Abraham Lincoln often told his team to take the initiative, be innovative, take prudent risks, strive to achieve success and should they succeed they would get all the credit and if they fell short he would take the responsibility. He would demonstrate that he was on "their" team, a collaborator, and willing to do all he could to provide the ideas and resources needed for them to be successful.

## ● Trust

If you do not demonstrate trust in your people from the "get-go" they will not trust you. Usually, you hear this the other way around. "You have to 'earn' my trust." On the contrary, to be trusting means that "you have to 'dis-earn' my trust." Showing, by word and deed, that you truly trust someone will inspire their trust in you, their confidence that you are looking out for them, and they will be more likely to be trustworthy than not. No, don't be naïve, however. You will encounter a few who are not trustworthy and they will readily reveal themselves. You should move them out quickly, but humanely.

## ● Self Discipline

Knowing what is right is not the same as consistently practicing what is right. Great leaders are masters of self-discipline. The problem is that even one slip has inordinate consequences. Let's say you have been doing everything exceptionally well for years, become highly respected, inspire the confidence of your team, and then slip up: a reactive comment or action, and angry reply, a deviation from your values. Unfortunately, this will often be remembered long after your considerable accomplishments and undermine your leadership immediately. Do not be reactive! Think, "how would this look as a headline in the paper tomorrow?"<sup>6</sup> Late in the 19th century, many letters written by Abraham Lincoln were found. These had NSNS AL on them; never signed, never sent, Abraham Lincoln. He had drafted and redrafted letters of admonition, censure, or revealing strong opinions that he ultimately believed would create more harm than good. Even if appropriate in the near term, he consistently thought of their impact on the long term. How appropriate today with the temptation of the "click of the mouse." I'm sure most of us would rather have thought twice before sending that email.

# Notes

1. MSBCoach Maturity Model “Ground Level Essentials”: Integrity, Learner, Emotional Intelligence, Communications, Ownership
2. Covey, Stephen: The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Simon & Schuster, 1989
3. MSBCoach Maturity Model “Base Camp Essentials, Alpine Essentials, and Summit Approach Essentials.”
4. “It’s Always About People” is the title of Chapter 5 “A Passion for Leadership” by Robert M. Gates (2016). It would be hard to gain more practical insight from real cases chronicled in these 33 pages. A “must read.”
5. We highly recommend two books about Abraham Lincoln: Team of Rivals by Doris Kearns Goodwin and Lincoln on Leadership by Donald T. Phillips. Several subsequent references to Abraham Lincoln, not footnoted, are from these sources
6. Truly aggressive, even absurd behavior, toward former CIA Director, Secretary of Defense, and President of Texas A&M and William & Mary Robert M. Gates and how he dealt with it is outlined in his book “A Passion for Leadership” published in 2016.



Ken Karr

Executive Coach and  
Trainer

ken@msbcoach.com

Ken is an executive leadership coach and expert in organizational and process design. His passion is seeing management and employees engage to set goals, implement them, measure success and continuously improve.

Ken has served clients worldwide as President of KRK Inc., Vice President of the Advance Reactor Corporation, IAEA expert, and an executive coach.

Authentic leaders who strive for superior results by effectively engaging their management team to implement and execute efficient business system energize Ken. Nothing is more satisfying than seeing strategic potential unlocked by enthusiastic and engaged employees aligned for results.



501 West Main Street Charlottesville VA 22903

434.293.5758

[www.msbcoach.com](http://www.msbcoach.com) | [info@msbcoach.com](mailto:info@msbcoach.com)