



# LEADERSHIP NOW

Achieving restaurant management  
excellence in 30 days.



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## If Only ...

You're the boss. The big cheese. The top dog running the show. You speak, employees jump. End of story, right?

If only it were that simple. *If only* employees would do what they're told. *If only* they'd take the initiative to get things done. *If only* you didn't have to push, push, push for every little improvement.

Well, add another *if only* to the list. If only you'd stop pushing and start leading, your restaurant operation would be well on its way to unlimited success. "You can't push a string," Dwight D. Eisenhower once said. He was right on the money.

Leaders are more than managers. Instead of pushing from behind, they're out front leading the charge. They set goals for themselves as well as employees, continually raising the performance bar, securing ongoing improvement. Leaders are confident decision makers, risk takers and problem solvers. They teach, motivate, coach and reward. They give employees reasons to follow.

Do you have what it takes to lead? Of course you do. Leaders aren't a special breed. They do, however, share special qualities:

- Leaders want to be in charge. You already took on that responsibility when you accepted the management job.
- Leaders have a desire to improve — themselves, their employees, their business, their bottom line. You took the first step when you picked up this book.

### 30 Days Away

You may be new to the ranks of management. Or taking the helm after relocating to a different store. Or just looking for a fresh start in your current position.

Whatever the case, you're 30 days away from becoming the leader you're destined to be.

During this period, as you follow the course outlined in this handbook, the things you say and do, the tests of will you encounter, the decisions you make and the bonds you develop all will contribute to how quickly your employees follow your lead.

Remember, your followers make you a leader, not the other way around. Although your title as manager carries a certain level of distinction and authority, it no longer supersedes the need to earn respect and establish credibility with your employees.

*Leadership Now!* condenses more than two decades of managerial observations, especially during the first 30 days on the job.

The ideas in this handbook don't represent all the skills necessary for effective leadership in the restaurant business, but they are fundamentals of success. Failure to exercise them will thwart your efforts to hone your leadership skills and extend the time it takes to win your employees' "followership."

It's critical to make every day count, which is why each chapter explores daily leadership activities and a weekly action plan:

### Week One

- Be Approachable
- Get Organized

### Week Two

- Implement Change
- Make Sound Decisions

### Week Three

- Surround Yourself With Great People
- Be a Great Counselor

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- Build Your Team
- Make Things Happen

Are you ready to take action? C'mon, Big Kahuna, it's time to stop bossing and start leading.



## TRUE STORY

A new GM was working the food line one night when the district manager made a surprise visit. Once word got around, of course, the operation began to sputter. Cook times inched up. Plate presentations faltered. When one of the entrees being plated for a four-top hit the floor, the cook nearly had a nervous breakdown. The GM, wilting under the stress, resorted to barking directions, which made the crew even more nervous. The seasoned district manager, meanwhile, took it all in stride. He went to the guests' table to apologize for the delay, then returned to the kitchen. Without saying a word, he grabbed a beverage napkin, wrote something on it, then flashed it for onlookers to see. Instantly, the GM cooled down, the staff perked up and order returned to the line. What had the district manager written? A hand-drawn smiley face, which got the point across.



WEEK  
ONE

## TRUE STORY

Upon taking the helm, a new general manager scheduled the first Saturday morning meeting, only to discover just half the staff in attendance — a lack of enthusiasm brought on by the ineptitude of the previous GM. But, boy, did attendees get the royal treatment. One manager plugged in some good tunes. Another brewed fresh coffee and set out bagels and fruit juices. There were snacks and toys for employees' children, who had also been invited. It didn't take long for the word to get around to the employees. Attendance was never a problem again.

## Be Approachable

You'll never get the chance to develop your leadership skills fully if your staff sees you as unapproachable. Just saying "If you have any concerns, stop by the office" doesn't do much to build confidence and trust — and approachability is all about trust.

**Earn respect.** You have to earn the respect you need to be an effective leader, especially if you're taking over a management position in a new restaurant. When pulling together your staff for the first time, usually within a week of your arrival, don't dwell on previous accomplishments. Your resume means little to employees. Introduce yourself, then spend time getting to know your people.

**Think dialogue, not monologue.** Use the kickoff meeting to establish bonds with your staff, or re-establish bonds if you're already the manager and trying to invigorate your leadership position. In either case, be a person first, a leader second.

**Ask questions.** What do employees like about their jobs? Dislike? What could be done to improve the working environment? An incoming manager might want to know which employees are students. What are they studying? Who's married? Kids?

You have one shot to make a good first impression. Make it at the kickoff.

Plan the kickoff meeting to be different from any other meeting employees have attended. Crank popular music as everyone arrives. Set out beverages and snacks. Arrange comfortable seating. If

## TRUE STORY

A manager just put in charge of the host and bar staff in a chain restaurant had to institute a new reservation policy. Rather than post a sign announcing a meeting to discuss the change, she bought catchy, though inexpensive, invitations and mailed them to the homes of her staff, including an RSVP. The clever manager not only presented herself as unique and fun, but also received verification from each employee who was supposed to be at the meeting.



A new manager was working her second opening shift in a new unit and decided to pull the servers and hosts together for an informal, five-minute discussion about the upcoming shift. She asked them about how the flow was going to occur, which areas they felt she should focus on, and if there were any new staff members who might need her support. The demonstration of concern and empowerment was received so well that the hosts and servers not only ran a great shift, but were literally dragging the new manager to all of their regulars' tables and "showing her off."

you've scheduled a Saturday morning meeting, let parents bring their kids.

The extent of your preparations will shape how your staff perceives the level of your leadership commitment. This meeting is about *them*. Make a statement.

**Display a sense of humor.** Try not to take this business too seriously. Your position of leadership may be a crucial steppingstone in your career, but employees probably hold their own jobs in much less regard. Show you're human — that you're willing to laugh with your staff and at yourself.

During week one of achieving leadership excellence, make it a point to smile when you observe a mistake or make one yourself. Let your sense of humor shine, especially when coaching and teaching employees. You'll be perceived as easygoing, informative and, above all, approachable.

**Don't manage with signs.** In general, signs establish barriers to meaningful, two-way communication. When taking over a new management position, the temptation is to use a piece of paper and a black marker to scribble out new policies, procedures, guidelines and general-information notices.

But how will you be perceived? Not as approachable, to be sure. What's more, you'll appear unprofessional if you have a bunch of hand-written notes taped all over the walls. If you must use signs on occasion, be creative.