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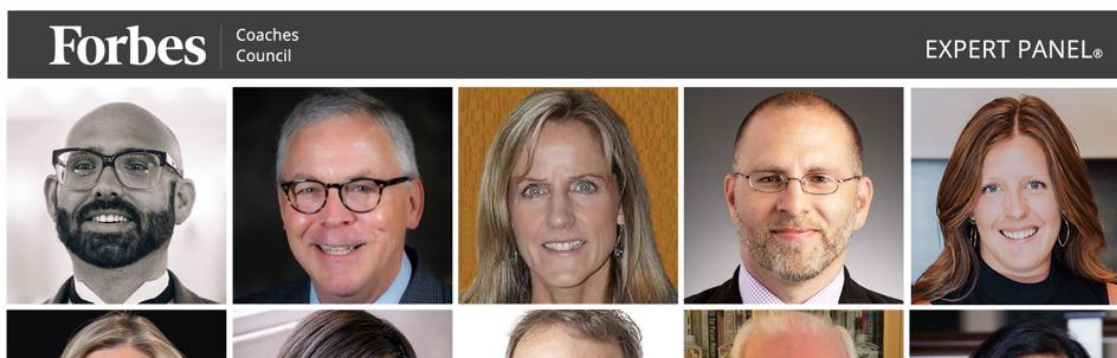
# 15 Leadership Lessons These Leaders Wish They Had Learned Sooner



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Leadership

Starting a career in a leadership position can be intimidating and even overwhelming at times. As with any other position, some trial and error needs to happen before you find your groove. When you're in leadership, though, your trials and errors are often on display and can have more of an impact on others.

Below, 15 members of [Forbes Coaches Council](#) share some surprising things they learned only after they had established their presence and gained their footing in a leadership role. Check out what they wish they'd known when they first started their careers to learn from their lessons and feel more capable and comfortable in any leadership role you may find yourself in now or in the future.





Forbes Coaches Council members share surprising things about leadership they wish they had known when they first started their careers. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS.

## 1. Leaders Are There To Help People Grow

I wish I had known the value of building a strong relationship with my leadership team and being more engaged in my career progression. I viewed them as people who were there to measure my work, not to help me grow. When I became a leader, I made sure everyone on my team knew that I was there to champion their careers, and their promotions meant that I was doing something right. - [Don Pippin, area|Talent](#)

## 2. Successful Leaders Can Flex And Adapt To Any Situation

Leaders need to understand how to flex and adapt to meet any given situation. Leadership is not a one-size-fits-all proposition, and the best leaders are those who understand what is needed and can then pivot to provide what will make a difference. If you can accurately diagnose a situation and then adapt to meet the needs at that time, you will be successful. - [Dan Ryan, ryan partners](#)

## 3. Self-Awareness Is The Key To Great Leadership

That great leadership starts with you. I always thought it was

about developing your people—and it is! But first, it is about cultivating your self-awareness, which requires you to consider your presence: how you show up and what you convey both emotionally and energetically. In leadership, awareness of your presence is the most overlooked detail, yet it is invaluable to your leadership success. - [Lori Kuhn, Thrive - a human development company](#)

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#### **4. Leadership Is Not About The Leader**

Leadership is not about you; it's about those you lead. It may seem counterintuitive, but to find success as a leader, the more you focus on the development of those around you, and the more you help your people recognize and then grow into their full potential, the more success you will have as a leader. You should certainly practice self-care, but focusing on your own contributions won't get you there. - [Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University & Human Capital Innovations, LLC](#)

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### **5. The Leader Isn't Necessarily The Smartest One In The Room**

Leaders are often not the smartest ones in the room. Early on in our careers, most of us assume that the title and rank of “leader” automatically qualifies a person. Along the way, I learned that this is simply not true. Hard work, honesty, communication and humility are the hallmarks of a leader, no matter what your level or rank is. Great leaders never want to be the smartest in the room.  
- [Melanie Towey, Melanie Anne, LLC](#)

### **6. The Best Leaders Are Transparent**

The best leaders admit mistakes, ask for forgiveness and make bad situations right. These “failures” aren't signs of weakness, but

rather strengths. Trying to look perfect isn't authentic, creates stress and models unhealthy perfectionism. Through transparency, you build stronger relationships as well as an environment where a commitment to doing the right thing impacts the culture and the bottom line. - [Lisa Marie Platske, Upside Thinking, Inc.](#)

## **7. Leaders Should Listen To And Respect Front-Line Employees**

Listen to front-line employees' feedback, not just managers. The reality is that if managers report one story back to the leader, and employees report another story, it's clear that there's a problem at the management level. Often, front-line employees have the solutions to organizational problems, and we need to give them a stronger voice. They should be heard and respected in exactly the same way leaders respect one another. - [Jay Rai, www.jayrai.com](#)

## **8. Becoming A Great Leader Is A Marathon, Not A Sprint**

To become a great leader, you need motivation. You need to challenge yourself and embrace grit every day. Being a leader is not a sprint; it's a long-distance event that helps you become a better leader with every challenge you overcome and every opportunity you take advantage of. - [Nick Leighton, Exactly Where You Want to Be](#)

## **9. There Are Big Differences Between Leadership And Management**

Leadership is an art. Management is a science. Leadership is about people. Management is about things. People are unstable. Things

are stable. You rely on behaviors and values to lead, while you use skills and knowledge to manage. Leadership is about “being.” Management is about “doing.” Understanding this difference will bring huge clarity into your day-to-day life and help you focus on leadership. - [Luis Costa, Luis Costa - coach · facilitator · speaker](#)

## **10. Every Leader Needs Their Own Personal Leadership Blueprint**

Leadership needs to be authentic to the leader, not an emulation of expected behaviors. It’s wonderful to aspire to emulate those we admire, but those are just sketches of what type of leader you could be, not the blueprint. Your leadership blueprint incorporates these traits along with your natural intelligence and behavioral preferences. Refine your blueprint to become clear, aware and authentic, and this will build social capital. - [Arthi Rabikrisson, Prerna Advisory](#)

## **11. There Is No Downtime For One In A Leadership Position**

When I first started my career, I wish I would’ve known that once you’re a leader, you’re always a leader. There is no downtime when you’re in a position of leadership. It’s imperative that you are always three steps ahead because when pivoting is necessary, everyone will be looking to you for answers. Learn to read yourself, and always position yourself in a place and headspace where you can help others grow. - [Jon Dwoskin, The Jon Dwoskin Experience](#)

## **12. New Leaders Can Learn A Lot From Bad Leaders**

You can learn as much, if not more, from the bad leaders you

encounter as you do from the good ones. In all cases, make note of behaviors you want to emulate and those that you hope you never do. Care about the people first, and they, in turn, will work hard for you. If you don't care about people, you will never lead them. -

[Teresa Ray, Dr. Teresa Ray](#)

### **13. Leadership Is About Delegating To The Right People**

One thing that surprised me about leadership was how little one needs to be involved in day-to-day activities. Leadership is about having the right people and teams in place so that you can point them in a direction and let them manage what needs to be done going forward. - [Rakish Rana, The Clear Coach](#)

### **14. A Leader's Morality Matters As Much As Their Competency**

Next to simple competency, the moral aspect of leadership is most important. You must lead by example and do your work with high integrity. But just "getting the job done" does not always include the moral imperative of doing the right thing even when it is inconvenient. Doing the right thing means admitting when you are wrong, putting yourself last and taking responsibility when it hurts. - [John M. O'Connor, Career Pro Inc.](#)

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### **15. Leaders Can't 'Change' Others, But They Can Inspire Them**

As a young leader, I thought I could lead by example and "change" others to make them better workers. I finally realized that this is just not true. People have to choose to change on their own. What I learned is that if I learned to change my own approach when

things weren't working, I could then inspire others to do the same. Self-awareness and ownership are the best ways to help others change and improve. - [Christie Garcia, Mindful Choice, LLC](#).

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