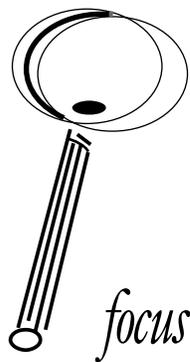


# 1

## Making the Transition to First-Level Leader



### Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify the five key competencies and associated behaviors of first-level leaders.
- Demonstrate at least four characteristics that followers seek in effective first-level leaders.
- Describe how first-level leaders use their technical, interpersonal, conceptual, and systems skills.
- Plan the five steps you will take in your journey from first-level supervisor to first-level leader.

### HOW DO I MAKE THE SHIFT TO FIRST-LEVEL LEADER?

The change in the supervisor's role to one of first-level leader involves much more than assuming a different or broader set of responsibilities. It really begins with a shift in mind-set and attitudes. In fact, unless supervisors successfully adopt new ways of thinking and behaving, they will not be able to become full-fledged first-level leaders. Shifting your thinking about your role may be your most difficult challenge.

Jim is a good example of how difficult it can be to let go of old ways of thinking and behaving. He has supervised a product development team for eight years. His team is responsible for providing up-to-date product development information on the company's intranet Web site, including creating a process flow that ensures the right information is available for those who need it in a timely way. This is a major challenge because of the complexity of the task and the need to work well cross-functionally with a variety of

other departments. In fact, the team is comprised of individuals from information technology, new product development, marketing, and software engineering. These individuals have never worked together as a team, and Jim is having difficulty building a sense of “one team.” Jim’s manager and others are encouraging him to leverage the talents of his team and share leadership responsibility with the entire team. Jim struggles with this more than most because he has been praised for his decisiveness, his willingness to tackle the toughest problems quickly, and his extensive knowledge of the product development process. Now he is being asked to not only lead the project but also help build team members’ leadership skills.

Jim talked about all of this with Ellen, his boss. She expressed her concern, saying, “You seem to be doing more than your share of work on this project. This is an opportunity for you to engage your team in taking on responsibilities that will build their knowledge and skills. It is important for you to facilitate the group in developing the new process rather than directing it yourself.”

As she talked with him, Ellen sensed Jim’s frustration. She remembered how difficult it had been for her to move out of the day-to-day decision making and allow Jim and his peer supervisors to get more involved in running the department. Ellen decided that it might be helpful to give Jim a comparative list of old attitudes versus new attitudes to help him understand how his thinking and behavior needed to change.

Take a look at the list she gave Jim [Exhibit 1–1]. From the previous description of his supervisory approach, it is easy to spot some of the old attitudes he is exhibiting. How about you? What would your employees say about you as a leader? How do you exhibit the new attitudes rather than the old attitudes? Circle those items on the list that you think your employees would say best describe your attitudes.

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**E**

**Exhibit 1–1**  
**Comparing Old and New Attitudes**
***Old Attitude***

Insists on doing things his/her way  
 Tells people what to do  
 Has little interest in others’ opinions  
 Focuses on compliance  
 Shares information selectively  
 Has interest in order and continuity  
  
 Gives customers what they require  
  
 Is involved heavily in day-to-day work  
 Finds out why mistakes were made and by whom  
 Makes most decisions

***New Attitude***

Remains open to new ideas and approaches  
 Sees self as a coach and mentor  
 Seeks ideas and feedback  
 Focuses on commitment  
 Shares information openly and broadly  
 Encourages innovation and continuous improvement  
 Looks for ways to exceed customer requirements  
 Delegates most routine work to others  
 Uses mistakes as learning and improvement opportunities  
 Expects employees to make decisions

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## **FIVE KEY COMPETENCIES FOR FIRST-LEVEL LEADERS**

At this point you have assessed your role as a first-level leader. You have also been introduced to the attitudes and behaviors that support the transition from supervisor to leader. Let's put all this together. Here is a description of the five leadership competencies, or skills, attitudes, and behaviors, that are important for first-level supervisors to master in their journey to being first-level leaders. They are as follows:

- Leading and motivating today's worker
- Leading with impact and influence
- Leading workplace teams
- Understanding your organization's competitive business environment
- Planning and managing change

### **Leading and Motivating Today's Worker**

Successful organizations will be those that are the most adept in attracting, developing, and retaining talented employees. This challenge is even greater because of changes in the composition, expectations, and preferred working arrangements of today's workforce. As the competition for high-quality employees intensifies, first-level leaders are responsible for creating a climate that keeps employees motivated, engaged, and giving their best.

Over the past decade there have been dramatic changes in the nature and composition of the workforce. These changes have been accompanied by shifts in the attitudes and expectations of today's worker. Ten years ago, experts predicted that the twenty-first-century workforce would include more women, more part-time and contractual workers, and less loyalty to one employer for an individual's entire career. All of these predictions have become a reality, and first-level leaders are faced with the challenge of leading workers who want more autonomy, inclusion in decision making, flexibility, and the opportunity to make the most of their skills.

Skilled first-level leaders know how to create a motivational climate for this highly diverse workforce. They lead in ways that ensure the best individuals are hired, allowed to maximize their talents, and retained. These leaders establish mutual expectations with employees. They ensure those managed understand what the organization expects from them and what they can expect from the organization. In so doing, first-level leaders establish mutually satisfying relationships with those they lead.

### **Leading with Impact and Influence**

First-level leaders have made a critical shift in their attitudes about power and authority. Most jobs today require managing a complicated and changing set of relationships and networks, often not defined on organizational charts. Leading with impact and influence is increasingly important as the workplace becomes not only more interdependent but requires teaming across traditional boundaries in a virtual world of electronic communication.

Working in this way requires leaders to adopt new ways of making decisions, involving others, and delivering results.

Successful first-level leaders know how to use influence skills to develop mutually supportive relationships and get things done. Traditional supervisors tend to use power to tell others what to do and to assert their authority. First-level leaders focus on building relationships with others. They know how to persuade others to devote time, energy, and resources to the things they want done. These leaders influence with integrity and work within and outside the formal chain of command to enlist commitment to things that are in the best interest of the organization. This is a critical aspect of their success.

First-level leaders use their influence skills in another important way. Rather than telling, they use various communication skills to influence employee commitment to the organization's vision, mission, and goals. They use vision to connect the work of their employees to the organization's broader purposes. These leaders enable their teams to make an impact by setting priorities that are aligned with the goals of the organization.

### **Leading Workplace Teams**

First-level leaders actively encourage teamwork and work to build strong teams. They lead in ways that are facilitative and that seek the appropriate involvement of others in making decisions, creating new products or services, and solving important problems. They value new ideas and different perspectives that lead to innovation and continuous improvement. Also, first-level leaders behave in ways that build shared ownership for the team's performance and encourage each employee to take personal responsibility for the work performed. In this way, they foster empowerment with accountability. First-level leaders not only understand what makes an effective team but also know what to do to get a team back on track. These leaders value and reward the contribution of teams as they encourage each team member to give his or her best.

Today most organizations are team-based, but often teams are geographically dispersed. This means first-level leaders are skilled in leading virtual teams that span physical and sometimes organizational boundaries. First-level leaders also lead project teams. They exhibit sound project leadership skills and know how to balance strategic leadership and tactical execution. In their role as project leaders, first-level leaders competently set up, monitor, and execute successful projects.

### **Understanding Your Organization's Competitive Business Environment**

Responding quickly and creatively to the needs of customers characterizes today's most competitive organizations. This is one of the major ways leaders, particularly at the first level, help organizations. Whether it's developing new products, finding ways to meet new requirements, or helping customers solve problems, these leaders play a critical role. The most successful first-level leaders go beyond merely meeting customers' basic needs. Today, these lead-

ers are also responsible for finding ways to anticipate future needs and tailor products and services to meet unique requirements.

Organizations that survive and thrive will be those that offer the highest-quality products and services. The quest for delivering the highest quality is unending. First-level leaders keep employees focused on excellence and lead in ways that help their work units deliver greater productivity, efficiency, and speed. Meeting this challenge begins with understanding the organization's key performance drivers.

Effective first-level leaders keep employees focused on key performance measures that are important to the organization's competitive future. To do this, they make sure employees understand the basics of their business. These basics are the few critical performance criteria that provide the competitive edge for the organization. These criteria in turn are reflected in the standards and measures that first-level leaders use to evaluate performance.

Taking your team to the next level is another important aspect of leading for competitive advantage. One way you can do this is by making sure each step in the process of delivering a service or producing a product adds value. First-level leaders do this by eliminating tasks that waste time and are repetitive or unnecessary. Actions such as these contribute to greater job satisfaction, reduced cost, and faster execution.

## **Planning and Managing Change**

No organization that expects to be successful can afford to maintain the status quo. First-level leaders play a vital role in the organization's ability to be flexible and adaptive and, at its most extreme, reinvent itself. This means knowing how to effectively manage the content, process, and human dynamics of change. The first-level leader's ability to demonstrate sound change management skills, overcome resistance, and build commitment is essential. First-level leaders recognize the need to be agents of change and work to minimize resistance. A key aspect of this is communicating what is changing and why, and then helping employees accept the need to change. In this way, leaders use their influence skills to help open the door to change.

Leaders make sure their own attitudes and behaviors shift in ways that are consistent with the change. As change leaders, they build confidence and model a few critical skills that lead the way for others. By giving consistent signals to their employees, they build support for the change and help employees understand what is now expected of them.

First-level leaders know how to design and execute a change plan and, once the change is under way, closely monitor whether anticipated results are being achieved. For them, change is managed in a proactive and planned way. Each step in the process is carefully thought out, communicated, and scrutinized.

## **How First-Level Leaders Are Demonstrating These Attributes**

Sometimes it is encouraging to look at how other leaders are demonstrating the attributes just described. For example, Bank of America has identified what it means to be a successful leader in its organization. Its first-level

leaders are working to ensure that the customer's perspective is at the forefront of all business decisions. To do this, the bank invests time in getting to know its customers' needs. This emphasis on customer focus is something first-level leaders are working with their employees to appreciate.

First-level leaders at General Electric, Citicorp, and Pepsi are doing a good job of creating an environment that encourages employees to use all their talents. This is one of the principal reasons they are succeeding at retaining employees. These first-level leaders are also pursuing ambitious goals and encouraging employees to do the same. They have created an environment where it is okay to innovate and try new things, using both success and failure to encourage continuous learning and growth.

First-level leaders at 3M, Coca-Cola, and Allied Signal understand their businesses and know the key performance drivers that are important for success. They understand how each functional area contributes to the organization, and they work to transcend silos to achieve greater results for everyone. Likewise, these leaders foster collaboration and use teams widely and effectively. In this way, they leverage teams to drive high performance.

## CHANGING HOW YOU VIEW YOUR JOB

As you think about the five leadership competencies, ask yourself how your job needs to change. An important aspect of the transition to being a leader is making changes in how you spend your time each day. Many of your responsibilities will remain the same but will be carried out in a different way. Other responsibilities will change a great deal. Here is an example.

Jerry is a manager in a financial services company. He manages three first-level audit supervisors who are responsible for the work of a large group of employees. Over the past several years the organization has grown by acquisition. As a result, Jerry and his team of supervisors work with groups across the country. Their work involves not only the traditional auditing responsibilities but also working with local sites to improve the quality, speed, and efficiency of the auditing process. These new responsibilities have caused Jerry and his leadership team to reexamine their role and priorities. At an upcoming staff meeting, Jerry has set aside time to talk about this issue. To prepare for this discussion, he took a look at the current list of job responsibilities for his first-level supervisors, as shown in Exhibit 1–2.

As he read the description, Jerry was startled. He hadn't realized how involved his supervisors were in the day-to-day execution of the department's work. Shifting their priorities to focus on helping customers improve the auditing process and suggesting new services were going to be more difficult than he thought. Jerry wants to do all he can to help his supervisors. As a first step, he decided to rewrite the position description that defines the audit supervisors' new role. He drafted two versions, both of which are shown in Exhibit 1–2. Take a look and decide which best describes the new role. As you make your decision, think about the competencies for first-level leaders previously described.



## Exhibit 1-2

### Redefining Job Responsibilities

#### Original Description

**Position:** Audit Supervisor, Financial Services

**Purpose:** Supervise day-to-day activities of the audit departments and ensure standards are met.

**Major Responsibilities:**

- Plan, direct, and conduct audits for client operations.
- Review and prepare corporate tax returns.
- Develop budget forecasts.
- Develop and improve accounting systems.
- Coordinate contact with federal and state agencies.
- Resolve problems with customers.
- Review and edit audit reports.

#### Version A

**Position:** Team Leader, Financial Services

**Purpose:** Lead audit team in providing the highest quality services.

**Major Responsibilities:**

- Plan, direct, and conduct audits for client operations.
- Review and prepare corporate tax returns.
- Guide the development of budget forecasts.
- Identify ways to improve accounting systems with input from staff.
- Review and edit audit reports.
- Meet with staff and coach on how to handle report errors and upgrades.
- Coordinate contact with federal and state agencies.
- Resolve problems with customers and keep staff abreast of the outcome.

#### Version B

**Position:** Team Leader, Financial Services

**Purpose:** Lead audit team in providing the highest-quality audit services.

**Major Responsibilities:**

- Ensure clients' audits are conducted according to schedule and in a way that meets corporate and regulatory standards.
- Assign staff to help plan audit approach and coach audit team on their approach.
- Keep staff informed of all audit activities and provide feedback from regulators and customers.
- Work to continuously improve the quality of audit services by involving staff in problem solving and process improvements.
- Assign responsibilities for review and edit of preliminary audit reports to senior staff.

Both versions illustrate specific ways to shift responsibilities from supervising to leading. You will notice that while Version A now involves others in the task of improving audit processes and requires the supervisor to coach the staff, most of the responsibility for the work still rests with the supervisor.

Version B describes much greater involvement of others in the work. Notice that the supervisor is less involved in doing the work and has more responsibilities for seeing that the work is done effectively. Thus, Version B more clearly describes the responsibilities of a true first-level leader.

## MODELING THE WAY

One of the critical aspects of your new role as a first-level leader is best summarized by the following quote from a customer service supervisor: “You can only lead others where you are willing to go.”

The message is that first-level leaders must practice what they preach. In other words, they must model the way. This means you must show employees by your own example the values, attitudes, and actions you want them to emulate. It is the consistency between what first-level leaders say and what they do that builds their credibility and earns them the trust of their employees. Leaders are the most observed people in the organization. Each of their interactions—with peers, superiors, customers, and employees—is a moment of truth. Nowhere is this more evident than at the first level. It is your day-to-day interactions with others that say more about who you are than anything you profess.

As you master the new leadership competencies and put them into practice, ask yourself: “Am I modeling what I say I believe? Am I acting in ways that are consistent with what I tell others is important? Can others watch me and know how to work effectively with customers, other departments, and fellow team members?” The following real-life examples illustrate how important modeling can be.

### Situation 1

Jamie is a training manager responsible for providing professional development seminars for nurses, administrators, and other technical personnel at a large midwestern medical center. She talks a lot about the importance of providing the best services to customers. Jamie told her staff that customers value responsiveness as well as creativity. She encourages her team to respond quickly to customers’ requests and find innovative ways to make training a rewarding experience.

On a typical day, she and her staff host three to five training seminars. Although she has a staff of six, it is a challenge to complete the preparations for these workshops in a timely way. This is true particularly because of last-minute changes in logistics, participant’s needs, and so forth. One day her team had three sessions to set up by 8:00 A.M. Unavoidably, two of Jamie’s employees were out of the office that morning. Think about her commitment

to customer satisfaction and responsiveness. How would you expect her to handle this situation? Choose one of the following:

- Explain the problem to the instructors and attendees, and apologize that everything can't be done by 8:00 A.M.
- Put aside what she planned to do from 7:30 to 8:00 A.M. in order to help her employees get the seminars set up.
- Encourage her employees to work as fast as possible to meet the 8:00 A.M. deadline.

### **Situation 2**

Bruce is doing a good job supervising an information technology team that supported the entire division. His network operations group makes sure the computer network is always up and running. Their work enables employees to access voice mail, e-mail, and most of the data required to track important business information. Bruce has a consistent response whenever anyone asks him about his team. He says, "My team is my strength. Everyone on the team is important to me and I am proud of the work they deliver for the division."

Bruce and his team worked long hours planning how they would handle the company's move to a new office site. Everything went well in the initial stages of the move. However, problems soon developed. Several employees in manufacturing support were unable to access voice mail for three days. Problems mounted. No one in the organization could receive e-mails from people outside the company. It took more than two days to fix the problem completely. Considering Bruce's stated appreciation for the value of his team, how would you expect him to handle this situation once the problems were resolved?

- Encourage the team to get back to work, since they had lost so much time trying to get the system back up.
- Find out what caused the system problems and make sure the team knows what went wrong and why.
- Debrief the team on what happened by discussing when went well and identifying the major lessons learned from the systems failure.

### **Matching Words and Behavior**

Situation 1: Jamie chose the second response. In effect, Jamie turned this crisis into an opportunity to practice what she preached by pitching in to help her employees. Her willingness to rearrange her priorities strongly reinforced her commitment to meeting customers' needs.

Situation 2: Bruce didn't do so well. He encouraged the team to get back to work so that they did not lose any more time. But the third response best models his estimation of the value of his team. This move was an important test for the team. Rather than focusing on productivity, Bruce should have encouraged debriefing the team on what happened so that they could identify what went well and learn from the failure. It took him a while to recover his credibility with his employees.

In summary, making sure your behavior matches your words is a key aspect of leadership. Leadership is about relationships. The best relationships are built on mutual trust, which is founded on being able to count on others to do what they say.

## LEADER-FOLLOWER PARTNERSHIPS

Increasingly, studies of effective leaders emphasize the importance of followers. In fact, it is your followers—that is, your team—who determine whether you are really exhibiting valued leadership qualities. For first-level leaders, leadership is in the eyes of their followers.

### Characteristics Followers Seek

We look for special qualities in our leaders. Thousands of studies have analyzed leadership from every possible perspective. But all of this research has found one characteristic that effective leaders share: the ability to attract and gain the support of followers. The most effective leader-follower relationship is one of partnership. In true partnerships, competent people join together to achieve what they could not achieve alone.

Thus, a central aspect of the shift from being a first-level supervisor to being a first-level leader is an enhanced ability to inspire followers to join you in accomplishing valued goals. Everyone knows that being in charge of a group is not the same as being a leader. But as supervisors become increasingly effective in their role as first-level leaders, they will begin to demonstrate characteristics that are most admired by followers. Research by James Kouzes and Barry Posner indicates that the attributes listed in Exhibit 1–3 account for most of the qualities we admire, that we feel make a leader worth following. From this list of twenty attributes, check the seven (no need to rank them) that you most look for and admire in a leader—someone whose direction you would willingly follow.

### Results of a National Poll

In their book *Leadership Credibility*, James Kouzes and Barry Posner reveal how those polled nationally rated the characteristics people most admire in a leader:

10%	Ambitious	87%	Honest
41%	Broad-minded	28%	Imaginative
27%	Caring	5%	Independent
58%	Competent	68%	Inspiring
30%	Cooperative	38%	Intelligent
33%	Courageous	10%	Loyal
32%	Dependable	14%	Mature
13%	Determined	5%	Self-controlled
49%	Fair-minded	34%	Straightforward
71%	Forward-looking	46%	Supportive

**E****xhibit 1–3****Characteristics of an Admired Leader**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ___ Ambitious<br>(aspiring, hardworking, striving)  | ___ Honest<br>(truthful, has integrity, trustworthy, has character)        |
| ___ Broad-minded<br>(open-minded, flexible, receptive, tolerant)                                    | ___ Imaginative<br>(creative, innovative, curious)                         |
| ___ Caring<br>(appreciative, compassionate, concerned, nurturing)                                   | ___ Independent<br>(self-reliant, self-sufficient, self-confident)         |
| ___ Competent<br>(capable, proficient, effective, efficient, professional)                          | ___ Inspiring<br>(uplifting, enthusiastic, positive about the future)      |
| ___ Cooperative<br>(collaborative, team player, responsive)   | ___ Intelligent<br>(bright, thoughtful, reflective, intellectual, logical) |
| ___ Courageous<br>(bold, daring, gutsy, fearless)   | ___ Loyal<br>(faithful, dutiful, devoted, unswerving in allegiance)        |
| ___ Dependable<br>(reliable, conscientious, responsible)  | ___ Mature<br>(experienced, wise, has depth)                               |
| ___ Determined<br>(dedicated, resolute, persistent, purposeful)                                     | ___ Self-controlled<br>(restrained, self-disciplined)                      |
| ___ Fair-minded<br>(just, unprejudiced, objective)  | ___ Straightforward<br>(direct, candid, forthright)                        |
| ___ Forward-looking<br>(visionary, foresighted, concerned about the future, has sense of direction) | ___ Supportive<br>(helpful, comforting, offers assistance)                 |

© 1994, adapted from *Leadership Credibility* by James Kouzes and Barry Posner.

You can compare your top seven selections to this research information. Look carefully at the list and you will see that there are four characteristics that are judged as the most critical: honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent.

This study was originally done in the late 1980s and then repeated in the late 1990s. It is noteworthy that there has been a shift in the top four characteristics. When the original research was done, individuals ranked being competent as the most valued attribute. But today, people place greater value on leaders who are forward-looking and inspiring. This supports the importance

of first-level supervisors becoming first-level leaders. While competence in your job is important, employees want leaders at all levels to be more strategic, visionary, and motivating.

## **FIRST-LEVEL LEADERS USE ALL THEIR SKILLS**

We have examined the five leadership competencies of first-level leaders and the characteristics most valued by those they lead. During this course, each chapter will be devoted to one of the five competencies. But there is another way to think about your role as a first-level leader. That is to understand the major category of skills you will use as you execute these competencies and model the highest-ranked leadership attributes. Let's examine how first-level leaders use their technical, interpersonal and conceptual, and systems skills.

### **Technical Skills**

Technical skills are those needed to be competent in the work itself. These are the skills individuals ranked as fourth on the list of the top twenty characteristics of admired leaders. Often individuals are promoted to first-level supervisor positions based on their technical skills. The most critical technical skills you exercise are the knowledge and training you need in your profession.

But competence also includes understanding the essentials of your business and customer expectations, particularly how competitor products or services compare with those of your organization. Technical skills also include proficiency in traditional management skills such as planning, budgeting, scheduling, and goal setting.

### **Interpersonal Skills**

Interpersonal skills enable you to work with understanding toward others. Several interpersonal skills were included among the top twenty most admired characteristics. These include being caring, cooperative, fair-minded, inspiring, and forward-looking. Critical interpersonal skills for first-level leaders also include the ability to communicate well with all employees.

In addition, relationship-building skills are important. Many of the six competencies, including influencing, building teams, and change management, require strong relationship-building skills. These skills enable first-level leaders to work effectively cross-functionally to accomplish important goals, understand what customers really want, respect the needs of a diverse workforce, and coach employees.

### **Conceptual Skills**

Although these skills are not listed among the twenty most admired attributes, they are essential to a leader's ability to execute many of his or her

responsibilities. Specific conceptual skills include analytical thinking, strategic thinking, creative thinking, and decision making.

Conceptual skills are those that help you solve problems, make decisions, and generate new ideas. They help you deal with the increasing complexity of today's workplace. Also, in a fast-paced business world, conceptual skills help first-level leaders deal with ambiguity and solve complex problems. Conceptual skills enable you to anticipate obstacles and think ahead about the next steps. They are important when working with your team to critically evaluate which option among several possible courses of action is best.

### System Skills

System skills are critical for first-level leaders to be able to work effectively across the organization. These skills are acquired by understanding what each department or function contributes to the entire organization. In so doing, first-level leaders have an appreciation for how their actions and decisions impact the entire organizational system—not just their own work unit. Systems skills also help first-level leaders identify common issues that underlie problems you or your team may be experiencing. This is critical when working to identify how to resolve customer problems or improve processes in ways that really make a difference. Because system skills require looking at all aspects of a situation, they help first-level leaders do a good job of planning and managing change.

## PLANNING THE FIVE-STEP JOURNEY

The journey from first-level supervisor to first-level leader requires careful planning. The first step is to create your performance improvement plan, which identifies areas of skill building and opportunities to model new attitudes and behaviors. Every improvement you make paves the way for your next step of growth. Take a minute and refer to the self-assessment in Figure I-1. Pick one or two areas where your score was lower than you would have liked—that is, areas in which you believe you are still more of a first-level supervisor than first-level leader.

There are five steps in a performance improvement plan:

- *Step 1:* Identify some aspect of your performance that you want to improve. Select one for which it is possible to see change within thirty to ninety days.
- *Step 2:* Describe the changes you desire. Be as specific as possible.
- *Step 3:* List one or two actions you will take to improve your performance.
- *Step 4:* Identify individuals who can provide coaching or feedback.
- *Step 5:* List one or two ways in which you will be able to measure your success. Set *no more than three* improvement goals at a time. Once you have achieved these, continue the process until you have mastered the five competencies of a first-level leader.

Exhibit 1–4 is an example of a completed performance improvement plan. Exercise 1–1 provides a performance improvement plan worksheet for you to use (make as many copies as you need).

**E****Exhibit 1–4****Sample Performance Improvement Plan****Performance Area:**

- Involve employees in decisions that affect them. These include making schedule changes, agreeing to new projects, and changing work priorities.

**Desired Changes:**

- Stop making most of the decisions myself. Talk to employees and get their input before I decide what to do.

**Actions:**

- Use department meetings to get ideas on how to manage the impact of changes in schedule and priorities.
- Tell employees about proposed changes in our budget and get their input before I submit it at the end of the month.

**Coaching/Feedback:**

- Nancy Martin—Ask her for coaching help; I need to make sure I don't raise false expectations.

**Measure of Success:**

- It should be easier to get employees to accept changes in schedule and priorities when they have input.
- 
-

**Exercise 1-1****Performance Improvement Plan Worksheet**

Directions: Complete this worksheet by entering the requested information.

**Performance Area:**

**Desired Changes:**

**Actions:**

**Coaching/Feedback:**

**Measures of Success:**



Effective first-level leaders have made the shift from supervisor to first-level leader. They understand that it is at the first level where the organization's most critical leadership needs are either met or not, and where the organization gains the commitment, flexibility, and accountability to either sustain competitiveness or fall behind. It is the first-level leader who translates strategy into action, transforms big-picture vision into day-to-day meaning, and models the behaviors that create the culture of the organization.

First-level leaders have mastered five key competencies that enable them to execute their role with skill. They know how to lead today's workers with their diverse needs and expectations and how to influence with impact their networked and relationship-driven organizations. First-level leaders know how to lead workplace teams that may be intact, virtual, or project teams. They help their employees understand the competitive nature of their business and know how to plan and manage change.

Today's first-level leaders build trust and credibility by modeling the attitudes and behaviors they want employees to exemplify. These leaders know how to create leader-follower partnerships and exhibit the leadership characteristics that are most admired: Employees value leaders who are honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent.

Finally, individuals who aspire to first-level leadership create a plan of action to guide the journey. They identify the skills and attributes they need to develop and set goals to guide achievement.



## Review Questions

1. First-level leaders: 1. (c)
  - (a) see leadership as their sole responsibility.
  - (b) effectively administer policies and procedures.
  - (c) actively involve employees in solving problems.
  - (d) use their authority to get things done.
  
2. When first-level leaders behave in ways that show what they value, it is called: 2. (b)
  - (a) team building.
  - (b) modeling.
  - (c) leadership.
  - (d) competence.
  
3. One of the four leadership characteristics that followers most value is: 3. (c)
  - (a) committed.
  - (b) caring.
  - (c) inspiring.
  - (d) fair-minded.
  
4. The ability to see a common issue underlying several work problems is an example of a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ skill. 4. (d)
  - (a) conceptual
  - (b) technical
  - (c) interpersonal
  - (d) system

5. The journey from first-level supervisor to first-level leader requires careful planning that identifies: 5. (a)
- (a) areas of skill building and opportunities to model new behaviors.
  - (b) areas of technical competence that you have seen others master.
  - (c) areas of marketplace challenge that are important for your business.
  - (d) areas of best leadership practices.