Change

Your First Leadership Job

How Catalyst Leaders Bring Out the Best in Others

Tacy M. Byham & Richard S. Wellins

www.YourFirstLeadershipJob.com
#YourFirstLeadershipJob

© Development Dimensions International, Inc., 2015. All rights reserved.
Introduction

BECOMING THE VERY BEST FIRST-TIME LEADER

Congratulations! You’re now in charge. Perhaps it’s your first time as a leader, or maybe you want to fine-tune your skills. Either way, you’ve begun one of the most rewarding chapters of your career. But, like many beginnings, the first few years can be challenging. Fortunately, you don’t have to tackle this challenge on your own. Your First Leadership Job gives you practical advice straight from others who have walked in your shoes. Not only does it include dozens of tools to ensure your success, it’s also based on the authors’ and DDI’s extensive experience and research, which ultimately have led to the development of millions of leaders around the world. In fact, a quarter-million leaders will be developed this year alone via DDI training.

Your First Leadership Job is divided into two sections. Part 1 introduces the concept of catalyst leader—one who sparks energy, passion, and commitment in others. Your transition to catalyst leader is a major step in your leadership journey. This book provides essential tips to put you on the catalyst path. Ultimately, leadership is about the many conversations—frequent, clear, authentic, and occasionally difficult—that you will have daily. Your First Leadership Job builds awareness of the fundamental skills you’ll come to rely on to make every one of these interactions successful.

Part 2 devotes 13 chapters to critical core leadership competencies, including coaching for success, hiring the best employees, turning dreaded appraisals into discussions that propel performance, and handling difficult employees. It also includes a chapter for first-time female leaders.

Look at Your First Leadership Job as an indispensable companion to becoming an awesome leader—one who will make a positive, lasting impact on your team, family, and career. Visit www.YourFirstLeadershipJob.com to learn more.

TACY M. BYHAM, Ph.D., is the CEO of Development Dimensions International (DDI). Tacy has worked with dozens of global organizations, creating custom solutions to improve their leaders’ performance. She believes that better leadership is not only about the workplace, but also about better communities and, ultimately, a better world.

RICHARD S. WELLINS, Ph.D., is a global expert in leadership development. Your First Leadership Job is Rich’s fifth book on talent management, including the best-seller, Empowered Teams. His research has been featured in Fortune, Business Week, CNBC, NPR, BBC, and Forbes.
## Contents

**Foreword** .................................................................................................................. xi
**Preface** ....................................................................................................................... xiii

### Part 1: Catalyst Leadership .................................................................................. 1

1. Now You’re a Leader ................................................................................................. 3  
   The Journey Begins

2. Boss or Catalyst? ...................................................................................................... 9  
   What Makes a Great Leader?

3. Navigating the Transition to Leadership .............................................................. 17  
   The Mind-Set You Need to Succeed

4. Your Leadership Brand, Part 1 .............................................................................. 28  
   Be Authentic

5. Your Leadership Brand, Part 2 .............................................................................. 35  
   Bring Out the Best in People and Be Receptive to Feedback

6. Leadership Is a Conversation, Part 1 .................................................................... 46  
   How to Make People Feel Heard, Valued, and Motivated

7. Leadership Is a Conversation, Part 2 .................................................................... 66  
   How to Build Trust and Ownership

8. Your Five-Step Conversation Road Map .............................................................. 75  
   Taking a Practical Approach to Get Results

9. Nothing Else Matters Unless You Get Results .................................................. 87  
   How to Execute with Focus, Measurement, and Accountability
Part 2: Mastery and Leadership Skills .............................................113

10. Hiring and Selecting the Best ..................................................115
    Behavior Predicts Behavior

11. What Your Boss Really Wants from You ....................................130
    Become an Adviser

12. Engagement and Retention .....................................................135
    Creating the Environment to Energize People

13. Meetings ..................................................................................149
    Make Them Count!

14. Coaching .................................................................................161
    Learning from Success

15. Feedback Fundamentals .........................................................173
    Specific, Timely, and Balanced

16. Handling Difficult Employee Situations .....................................181
    Focus on the Behavior, Not the Person

17. Delegation ...............................................................................191
    Be a Delegator, Not a Dumper

18. Performance Management ......................................................201
    An Ongoing Cycle, Not an Event

19. You and Your Network ..............................................................209
    Nurture Your Business Relationships

20. Influence .................................................................................221
    Look Up, Down, and Across

21. A Woman’s First Leadership Job ...............................................229
    Own the Moment

22. Leadership Changes the World ................................................241
    The Difference Is You
Part 3: Bonus Chapters and Tools ..............................................245
(available online at the DDI microsite)

Citations ............................................................................................247
Acknowledgments .............................................................................253
About DDI ........................................................................................255
About the Author ..............................................................................256
Index ..................................................................................................259
Leadership makes a difference.
You might not know that now. But you will.

I've been in banking my entire career, primarily with Fifth Third Bancorp, which operates in a dozen states in the Midwest and Southeast. Banking is an interesting business for many reasons, but one of them is this: We don't make anything. Our product is exactly like our competitors'. We borrow it for the most part, and it all looks the same. It's green, rectangular, and has the same relative value on a given day. In order to stand out in a crowded field, the focus needs to be on how we deliver that value—100 percent through our people.

I believe that leadership happens all around you. It happens in the tone you set and in the many, many conversations you have to accomplish one simple, but complex thing—bring people into the vision of the outcome you need.

But most people don't think about those things until they get their first leadership job. You're good at being an expert, and then you get promoted for your expertise into a completely different job. And so you experiment, because no one ever tells you—except for DDI—the right or wrong way to get the most commitment from the people around you.

Let me rewind the clock a bit. My first big leadership job was what my organization called a "broadening" responsibility—an assignment that addresses a challenge a company is having and that also helps a leader grow and develop. One day I was called in to see my boss's boss, the Vice Chairman, and I found myself being asked to take on a division in which I had no expertise. None. I was being asked to leave my job in human resources to run operations for the much larger holding company.

And I would be leading folks who were highly technical, very proficient, and very experienced. I was in my mid-thirties, with three kids under 10 at home. My new reports were, in many cases, 20 years older. It was a challenging division in need of some significant change and facing big new performance goals.

I talked to some people who knew more about the challenges facing the operations division. I was worried, but I took the job. I knew going in that I didn't have a quarter of the knowledge of the people who had been there for years. And, I was going to need all of them to teach me.
That was the moment I knew I needed to rely on leadership.

We did a number of things, all of them focused on gaining people's trust. We began something new, what is now commonly called “one down” or “two downs.” We would regularly gather in large groups (some of the teams had 15 or 20 people), and I would encourage managers to talk about what they had accomplished. They could, in essence, brag to me. And then I would use those accomplishments to talk about what we could do if we all had the same vision. It sounds simple, but they were powerful moments. These conversations supplied the backbone for the kind of trust, vision-building, and engagement that, over time, helped everyone see how we could be recognized in the organization for the magnitude of the changes we were contemplating. I created a parade and gave them the opportunity to jump in front of it.

In the end, we accomplished one of the most significant changes in our company's history. We centralized operations, cut costs to the tune of 40 to 50 percent, improved service-level agreements and delivery, and boosted customer satisfaction.

So, now it's your turn. What will you do with the opportunity you've just been given?

I learned the concept of catalyst leadership from DDI early in my career, and this book will help you learn it too. You'll find out how catalysts can ignite a flame in others, gain their commitment, and drive productivity. Now, I've never met a perfect supervisor. I've never been one. Leadership takes work. But, the upside is tremendous—helping people achieve their goals and dreams.

We all approach leadership from different angles. But if you focus on the goal of catalyst leadership and put it in practice every day, then you'll bring out the best in others in surprising ways. You'll bring it about in yourself as well. And you'll love what you do.

Kevin T. Kabat
Vice Chairman and CEO at Fifth Third Bancorp
Preface

When we decided to write this book, we wanted to look at leadership through a fresh lens. After all, the last time we did a Google search, there were 392,000,000 entries for leadership books—double the number of cookbooks! There are leadership books written by or about the world’s greatest thinkers (Confucius, Machiavelli, and Gandhi). And thousands of books on leadership have been published by dozens of management experts (Peter Drucker, John Kotter, Tom Peters, and Jim Collins, to name a few). All offer great stories, opinions, and practices of what constitutes the DNA of great leadership.

Our book, however, differs from all the rest in three respects.

1. **It has a singular mission:** to give you the practical advice and tools to succeed as a first-time, first-line leader. The first section features nine chapters that will help you better understand what it takes to become an awesome leader—one we call a catalyst who sparks action in others. And it focuses on a set of fundamental skills—we call them interaction skills—that will serve as the foundation for every one of the dozens of conversations you’ll have with others every day. These are skills you can use, not only in the workplace, but also at home and in your community. The second section provides advice on a host of diverse, vital skills—we call them mastery and leadership skills—that you’ll need to call upon in your new role. These include coaching, selecting new employees, and promoting a culture of engagement, among others.

2. **The content of this book is based on unparalleled experience.** For the past four decades, our company, DDI (Development Dimensions International), has helped clients develop over 250,000 leaders every year, in 26 countries, across thousands of organizations. Nothing we say in this book is based on whim or theory. It comes from real-time experience—a lot of it.

3. **We carry our experience one step further to evidence.** DDI has helped hundreds of clients demonstrate the relationship between our leadership practices and principles with metrics that matter: improved skills, higher engagement, better safety records, and gains in productivity. We don’t rest on our laurels; we rest on our proof.

Whether you read our book in detail or focus on those chapters that are the most relevant for you, we’ll have accomplished our goal if you use three or four pieces of the advice we’ve provided. You know, in many ways you can look at this book as a hybrid between a typical leadership book and a cookbook. We provide the kitchen-tested recipes, but it’s up to you to do the cooking.

*Tony and Rich*
Mastery and Leadership Skills

CHANGE
It’s about People

Pre:Think

“This doesn’t make sense!” “What’s wrong with the way we’ve been doing things?” “This too shall pass!” Sound familiar? We’re sure that reactions like these to an upcoming change have passed through your lips. But now, as a leader, you are charged with being a change maker. With that in mind:

• What can make implementing workplace change difficult?
• Why do people resist change even when it will make their job easier and ultimately benefit them, their team, and the organization?

You’ve probably already received a lot of sage business advice about the concept of change—most of it in small, bite-sized bits: Change is inevitable. Change is the only constant. Change or die! These inspirational bandages may be helpful in the moment, but in the long term, they’re not enough.

Change is a constant in business—a good thing. There are business opportunities to explore, new technologies to implement, and different work processes to invent that can save time, money, and aggravation. In fact, you probably started your new job with some potentially brilliant ideas that you hope will improve the way your team works together. But lasting change is tougher to pull off than it sounds. Research shows that approximately 70 percent of workplace changes fail shortly after they are implemented.¹ We suspect the number may actually be higher. And, it’s awfully hard for managers and staff to get motivated when
they believe that the latest project from on high is going to die just like the last one . . . no matter what they do. In reality, the change itself—at least the nuts and bolts of a new process, product, or structure—is rarely the culprit. Typically, things go wrong because leaders aren’t skilled in how to implement changes. That brings us to the most important advice about change: it can make people very uncomfortable, even fearful. So, from a leadership perspective, driving change in the workplace is less about process and more about people.

Driving change in the workplace is less about process and more about people.

Some of the most important conversations you’ll have will focus on helping other people accept and embrace change as quickly as possible. Obviously, this is good for business. Change can be disorienting and cause a dip in individual or team performance and morale. Your job is to work as quickly possible through the change process to reorient the team. Although we expect that you’ll play a role in helping your supervisor, peers, and other network partners deal with any new developments coming their way, in this chapter we concentrate on the sometimes-difficult conversations you’ll be having with your team members or other direct reports. If change is a constant, you should be prepared to have these conversations early and often.

### DDI’s executive assessment data (including over 20,000 executives globally) indicates that a leader’s predisposition to change can significantly influence his/her ability to think and plan strategically for future scenarios, and to identify creative strategies for capitalizing on untapped market opportunities.

People will react to each new change in different ways. Some will quietly ignore it or do the least necessary to comply. For others, it can get emotional. Confusion, anger, fear, and resentment can surface, particularly if changes haven’t gone well in the past, or if people believe that their jobs or income are at stake. In these situations, it can feel like a lot of energy coming at you very quickly. Whatever the reaction, it’s important to know where people stand as you help them work through the change process.

Figure 1 describes four common reactions people can have, and what those reactions often look and sound like. Use this continuum to help you diagnose where people are before you focus your response on their concerns.
We’ve identified three actions, or Change Accelerators, that you can use to frame your conversations in a way that avoids triggering an avalanche of resistance in others. As you may suspect, they involve the Key Principles (see Chapters 6 to 7), particularly Empathy and Involvement.

**Change Accelerators**

- **Describe what’s changing and why.** When you introduce change, be clear about the rationale behind it. People tend to respond to change more favorably when they understand the business reasons for it, and can understand its potential benefits.

- **Seek out people’s reactions and feelings.** When you ask people how they are feeling about what’s coming, it helps them feel heard and involved in what’s happening. This goes a long way toward building trust and commitment. It can also help you keep the lines of communication open as the change is implemented.

- **Help people regain a sense of control.** If people can identify ways to control aspects of the change—or at least have some influence over them—they’ll be more open to embracing it. In exploring the change, ask people for their ideas on how to adapt or improve the change to make it easier to embrace and implement.
A Change Is Gonna Come

Katherine, a marketing executive for a national nonprofit, accidentally ignited a big, noisy mess when she attempted to implement what she thought was a simple change:

*It was just a logo and design change, or so I thought. We are a national nonprofit—I worked for the home office—with chapters in every state. All we wanted was to make all the materials that everyone sent out about our programs look a little more uniform. Like we were all on the same team, which was going to make national fundraising easier. The people who report to me work in the local markets, so it was my job to teach them about the new identity standards and give them the new image kits that they should use instead of the ones they designed themselves. The rollout was smooth!*

Now, I guess I was naïve, but I was sort of under the impression that when I told people to do something, that they were going to grumble, maybe, but that they’d eventually do it. Well, you’d think we had told them we were going to kidnap one of their children! Not only did everyone complain—“Why do we have to do it this way? We use local designers and images for all our materials, and that matters! We don’t want to look like everyone else!”—they organized among themselves and went over my head to the executive director. They complained about the change and me. It was a complete—I can’t even say the word in polite company—that’s how bad it was.

Katherine made a classic mistake: she assumed that her team would understand and buy into the business rationale for the change. They may have understood the rationale, but they certainly did not buy into it. So Katherine did a good job of “Describe what is changing and why,” but she failed to “Seek out people’s reactions and feelings.” In other words, she appealed to the head and ignored the heart of her team members. You may be tempted to view any reaction other than joyful noises from your team to be a major annoyance—and maybe even a revolt to be crushed. We get it. But taking the time to understand why each person is responding as he or she is will help you in some important ways, not the least of which is helping each one to regain a sense of control versus the change. Strong emotions form a barrier that prevents people from seeing the true benefits of the change. And because they’re upset, unsettled, and unsure, they have a greater need to feel that someone is listening to them. Your job is to walk toward the barrier with empathy, not away from it in anger.

When you get to the emotional barriers, use the third Change Accelerator to help people regain a sense of control over the situation. The control discussion
is a simple and easy way to overcome resistance to change. It helps you break
down the change into three distinct categories: The parts that they can control,
the parts of the change or people they can influence, and the parts that are
already decided and nonnegotiable. By exploring change in this way, team
members will see that they can control, or at least influence, a lot more than
they first thought. It will help turn them from victims of change to masters of
change.

In Figure 2 you can see how Katherine might have broken down the unpopular
logo change to prepare for a discussion with her team.

FIG 2 Control Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>No Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each chapter still can control the content</td>
<td>I can ask good questions to help chapters think about new ways to maintain</td>
<td>Each chapter needs to have redesigned materials by a specified date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and layout of its written materials. Each</td>
<td>some of their own identity while taking full advantage of the fundraising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chapter can learn the different design</td>
<td>awareness that a national brand can offer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>options in its own way.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This approach offers another big-time benefit: It lets you revisit with your team
members why their jobs matter. How is the impending change going to impact
their value to the company? Where is their opportunity to grow? Think of a
conversation about change as an engagement conversation in disguise. When
you talk with your team members about how they fit into the changing bigger
picture, you drive loyalty and commitment. You also can identify ways that you
can help them continue to grow.
Use the Interaction Skills

Before people can truly accept change, they'll need to have their personal and practical needs addressed. Use the Key Principles to reach people who need to be heard, feel appreciated, and feel more in control of what comes next. Rely on the five Interaction Guidelines to help you craft your conversations to meet the practical concerns your team may be expressing. This will include the specifics of what they are expected to do differently, what kinds of tools, training, or support they might need, and an agreement on how the change will be monitored.

The Discussion Planner in Chapter 8 is a tool that we encourage leaders to use to organize their thoughts before they talk with team members. It will work whether you’re talking with an individual or a small group. The first section prompts you to incorporate the Key Principles—Esteem, Empathy, Involvement, Share, and Support—as you speak with your team. The second section (Interaction Guidelines) walks you through each practical step as you discuss the change situation. Here are some tips for using each Interaction Guideline in a change discussion:

OPEN by identifying what is changing and why. Ask yourself:

- How will I describe the change?
- What business rationale will I provide?
- How will I describe the benefits of the change to the person or team?

CLARIFY how the change affects the person or team. Ask yourself:

- How will I describe the impact on the person or team?
- How might the person or team react to or feel about this change?
- What will I say to seek issues or concerns?

DEVELOP ideas for implementing the change. Ask yourself:

- What will I say to seek feedback about the change?
- What aspects of the change can the person or team influence or control?
- What resources or support can I provide?
AGREE on a plan for implementing the change. Ask yourself:

- How will I ensure they know who is accountable for the change?
- What can I say to encourage contingency thinking?
- What can I say to prompt ideas for tracking progress and measuring results?

CLOSE by summarizing and expressing confidence. Ask yourself:

- What might I say to highlight features of the plan?
- What might I say to check the person or team’s confidence level?
- What might I say to enhance the person or team’s self-esteem?

If you get stuck with your conversation planning, return to the DDI microsite. We have additional tips that can help inspire you to find the right words to use when faced with a nervous change agent in the making.

Citations: Change


About the Author

Tacy M. Byham, PhD

Tacy was named CEO of Development Dimensions International, Inc. (DDI) in 2014. She began her career there in the early 1980s as an intern in the video productions department and computer/technology groups. After graduate school she worked as a trainer in Europe and an assessor for tech clients in the United States. She helped develop innovations and eventually used her experiences to build DDI’s fast-growing executive development business.

An expert in creative, custom solutions to address talent management challenges, Tacy’s clients include Keurig Green Mountain, ADP, BNY Mellon, and Texas Children’s Hospital. Her writing has been featured in The Conference Board Review, CLO magazine, People Matters (India), and The ASTD Leadership Handbooks (2010 and 2014). She is also a frequent presenter for the Conference Board and ATD (formerly ASTD), where she speaks on topics ranging from innovation, to women and leadership, to mid-level leadership.

Tacy grew up in the home of a thought leader and entrepreneur. Her father, Bill Byham, founded DDI in 1970, and Tacy’s own perspective on leadership was developed over a lifetime of dinner conversations with her family about what makes people better stewards of the things that matter to them. She was immersed in the science of human possibility from day one as well as the importance of community service (her mother is a retired politician and community volunteer). We traveled the world as DDI grew, Tacy says of her early access to leaders and management thinkers. I had a bird’s eye view of how things actually worked and could work better. I was inspired. And, after working for a few bad bosses in the tech industry, I wanted to join DDI to work with our fascinating clients and help solve their people challenges.

On reflection, it’s not what you get, but what you give. Well, recently, one of Tacy’s teammates left DDI to pursue his life’s passion. In a parting note he wrote, I could write pages on how thankful I am to have worked for you. I really appreciate your genuine care and concern for me … for all of us!

Tacy holds an MA in Mathematics/Computer Science from Mt. Holyoke College and a PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Akron.

@TacyByham
About the Author

Richard S. Wellins, PhD

Rich currently serves as head of worldwide research and marketing for DDI. He has loved every minute of being a leader (well, almost every minute). Since joining DDI more than 30 years ago, he’s held various leadership roles, including positions in sales, R&D, and marketing. Rich earned his PhD in Social/Industrial Psychology from American University. Prior to DDI, he served as a professor of psychology at Western Connecticut State University and as a research psychologist for the US Department of Defense.

This is Rich’s fifth book on leadership, including a best seller, Empowered Teams. He has worked with dozens of clients on leadership assessment and development projects, including Toyota, AXA, Nissan, Colgate, A.T. Cross, and Sunrise Living. He has presented dozens of conference keynotes on his research around the world, including the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), The Conference Board, Association for Talent Development, HRroot (China), and People Matters (India). He currently serves as a judge for CNBC’s Asia Business Leaders of the Year Award (ABLA), interviewing the top-performing CEOs throughout Asia. Rich also spearheads DDI’s biennial Global Leadership Forecast, which features data on best leadership practices collected from over 75,000 leaders. His work has been featured in Forbes, the New York Times, National Public Radio, CNBC, Fortune, and the Wall Street Journal.

Rich’s interest in leadership came from two life-changing experiences. The first: My father owned two drug stores, and my mother worked with him running the cosmetics counter, he recalled. As a teen, Rich was assigned every dirty job there was, from running deliveries to cleaning restrooms. My dad wanted to make sure that nobody thought I got better treatment than anyone else. One of the stores served a neighborhood in New Britain, Connecticut, with a high poverty rate. His dad sent him on almost all the deliveries in the community to individuals who relied on the supplies he delivered. His objective was to teach me, and I’m grateful, Rich said. All of these were valuable lessons in leadership, sharing, and accountability.

His second leadership learning experience was with the Department of Defense as a research psychologist. He spent time on field exercises with the 101st Airborne, working with first lieutenants. As Rich likes to say, If you can do well as a military first-line leader, the rest of your leadership positions will be a lot easier.

@RichWellins