<u>**The Importance of Developing a Personal Leadership Philosophy**</u>

It is common in all branches of the U.S. armed services for top-ranking officials to develop and declare their philosophy of leadership, also known as their personal leadership philosophy. But personal leadership philosophies aren't just for top-ranking officials; they are necessary for everyone who desires to become a better version of themselves. Personal leadership philosophies provide individuals and organizations with a virtual map to guide them in this chaotic world. Before we dive into discovering how to write your own personal leadership philosophy, let's first understand what a personal leadership philosophy is.

What is a personal leadership philosophy?

Properly crafted personal leadership philosophies (1) serve as filters to separate what is important from what is not, (2) clearly state which markets will be served and how, and (3) communicate a sense of intended direction to the entire organization.

A personal leadership philosophy, states the core values *you* live by, what *you* expect of your people, what they can expect of *you*, and how *you* will evaluate performance.

Now that we understand what a personal leadership philosophy is and what it is not, let's dive deeper into the benefits of developing a personal leadership philosophy. After all, we want to understand why we are investing our most precious resource, time, into this endeavor.

What are the benefits of developing a personal leadership philosophy?

A well-defined personal leadership philosophy provides your team with transparency in the form a written document that lays out your core leadership values and sets priorities for the organization. In short, your team knows what to expect from you and what you expect from them.

A personal leadership philosophy also has the ability to speak for you when you are not physically present, a benefit that is becoming more and more attractive with the rise of remote employees commuting from home or reporting to a regional supervisor. Your employees and team members should be able to turn to your personal leadership philosophy for guidance as they face various decision points.

How do you develop a personal leadership philosophy?
There are three main steps to building your personal leadership philosophy: define, disseminate and demonstrate.

STEP 1: Define

The first step in developing your personal leadership philosophy is defining you core values, key traits and deep beliefs. Be sure to set aside time away from distractions and spend 20-30 minutes reflecting on and writing down your responses to these questions:

- What are your core values?
- What do you believe to be necessary to success?
- What traits do you wish to call out in others?

Now for the hard part: self-editing. Your list of core values is probably extensive as these principles are rooted deep into our identity. However, it is important to remember that a good personal leadership philosophy is concise and easy to remember. Your team shouldn't have to flip through pages upon pages, they should be able to look at a short paragraph that has been distilled down to the essence of your philosophy.

Once you have defined and refined your core values, translate these into leadership principles that you will model and that you want to call out in others. This will take a bit of work, creativity and innovation but the outcomes are certainly worth it!

- For example, if one of your core values is trust you could translate it into the following leadership principle: "I will work to earn the trust and respect of those around me by empowering leverage their talents in order to do their jobs."

STEP 2: Disseminate
Once you have your basic personal leadership philosophy, it is time to disseminate and distribute it to those closest to you. This may be a bit frightening as you are sharing the core of who you are and where you want to go, but this step is crucial to having a successful personal leadership philosophy. Personal leadership philosophy aren't made to stay locked up in a safe, secure vault…they are meant to be living documents that help us communicate and interact with others!

- Begin disseminating your personal leadership philosophy to your "trusted agents", those around you who will give you honest, constructive feedback.
- Don't just email your personal leadership philosophy out and hope for the best, schedule in a time to have a conversation with your core team around your personal leadership philosophy.
- During this conversation, ask for their feedback and suggestions on how to improve it; after all, they should be the subject matter experts on your leadership style!

STEP 3: Demonstrate

After reflecting, writing and communicating, now it is time for the fun part: to actually demonstrate your personal leadership philosophy! A personal leadership philosophy that does not match up with your daily actions, behaviors and directives is worthless. Conversely, a personal leadership philosophy that is congruent with who you are and how you do business is a powerful, and essential, leadership tool.

- You should identify with, and know, your personal leadership philosophy so well that you it oozes out of you and your actions.
- Your personal leadership philosophy should easily provide others with information on who you are and what you stand for.
- Your personal leadership philosophy should guide your daily decisions and choices.

Now that we have reviewed what a personal leadership philosophy is, what the benefits of a personal leadership philosophy are, and how to develop a personal leadership philosophy it is time for you to commit to investing in your development as an individual and leader. As Ed Ruggerio in "The Leader's Compass" so eloquently said "Successful leaders know their personal leadership philosophy and communicate it by living it passionately every day in all they say and do. They have taken the time to determine who they are, their values and priorities. They know their course and have set their internal compass, which gives them greater self-knowledge, greater self-confidence, and improved effectiveness as a leader."