



Career Management Column as published in Leadership and Management Books, L&MB - [Rita Balian Allen](#), Author of *Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself*

"Lead With YES"

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September 2016

There is a great poem by Charles Swindoll that starts as follows, "*The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life.*" It is a very inspiring poem about how powerful our outlook and attitude is in every aspect of our lives. The incredible impact it can bear on our decision making, relationships as well as outcomes. Most compelling is his point that it is ultimately in our hands to control and take charge of our attitude. Towards the very end of the poem, he says "*I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it*". How true are those words? Although, at times we may find it hard to put into practice. Empowering ourselves with a positive attitude and optimistic outlook can make all the difference in our satisfaction, engagement and success.

As leaders, we are role models and set the tone for preferred behaviors, norms and standards for the team. Even as individual contributors, we lead by example to inspire and motivate others. You don't have to be in a leadership role to be a leader. Do we lead with optimism and positivity? How do we share our thoughts, perspectives and insights? Are we credible and persuasive when articulating and proposing our ideas? Do we do so with confidence and optimism in ourselves and the outcome? If we believe the message we are delivering, so will others! Do we lead with YES!...I am excited about this and you should be too!

So much of our success in career and life can be dependent on our attitudes and disposition. Understanding obstacles while embracing opportunities takes confidence, preparation, planning and optimism. Sometimes we have to proceed with the knowledge that we are ready and able to forge forward while managing some of the unknowns along the way; AND with the

calmness to appreciate it may not always turn out the way we planned. Leading with YES gives us the energy and hope that it can work! When we lead down that path in a clear and realistic manner, others will follow as such. First, we have to realize and appreciate how much our actions and behaviors role model the tone for others.

When we 'Lead with YES':

- We are placing faith in ourselves, our teammates, and our collective knowledge and experiences
- We are creating an environment and culture of optimism, enthusiasm and confidence
- We are saying we are strong enough to push forward and deal with challenges along the way
- We are progressing with an open mind, flexibility and agility to new approaches and strategies
- We are accepting that even if our pursuit does not end up how we planned, we embrace it as a learning, not a mistake
- We motivate and inspire others to take risks, push out of their comfort zones and believe in their ability to succeed
- We exude confidence, credibility, trust and value-add
- We deliver a message filled with perseverance, strength, determination and drive
- We are part of a compelling story people will want to hear; contributing to a vision that is felt and believed
- We position ourselves and others to be, *and stay*, engaged and fulfilled

Leading with YES, does not mean that we don't know when or how to say 'no' or 'not now', it's more of a mindset that begins with and projects optimism, confidence and credibility. It is also about establishing a strong foundation of trust and collaboration. It encourages risk-taking and enables others to follow through on ideas and innovation.

How do we learn to lead effectively and have the confidence to 'Lead with YES'? I would like to share one of the most trusted sources on becoming a better leader....*The Leadership Challenge* by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner. I have had the opportunity to hear them speak on more than one occasion and continue to be inspired by their teachings. As a result, I have used their book and accompanying resources in my coaching and training practice as well as within the classroom with students for several years.

The Leadership Challenge is a best-selling leadership book that offers an evidence-based leadership model created by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner that has been widely used for nearly three decades. They emphasize how credibility is the foundation of leadership. Based on extensive research conducted, they uncovered five practices common to personal-best leadership experiences. When leaders get extraordinary things done in organizations, they are engaged in:

Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership®:

- 1) *Model the Way* - clarify their values and give voice to their values forging agreement around common principles and common ideals
- 2) *Inspire a Shared Vision* - envision possibilities and enlist others in a common vision speaking to their needs and desires
- 3) *Challenge the Process* - willingness to experiment and take risks, searching for opportunities that allow for growth, improvement and innovation
- 4) *Enables Others to Act* - build trust and teamwork, foster collaboration, empower and strengthen capacity to deliver on promises made
- 5) *Encourage the Heart* - having utmost faith in abilities, recognizing contributions and celebrating values as well victories

Leadership begins and ends with inner strength and self-awareness. Knowing ourselves very well and always staying true to oneself. Sincerity, transparency, and vulnerability are key attributes in leading effectively. Build your leadership capabilities as you build your career. When you are aware of your value-add, your personal brand and your leadership style...you will be your authentic best self and enable yourself to 'Lead with YES'!

Ask Rita: Do you have a career question and/or a career story to share? Email your questions or stories to rita@ritaballenassociates.com

Rita Balian Allen is the president of Rita B. Allen Associates, a national career management firm specializing in executive coaching, leadership development, management training and career development. She is a lecturer at Boston-area universities, a sought-after speaker and presenter, the author of numerous articles, blogs and the book, "Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself: The Three Ps Marketing Technique as a Guide to Career Empowerment". She is a regular Huffington Post blogger and writes a monthly career management column for Leadership & Management Books. Rita was voted one of the top ten executive coaches by the Boston Women's Business Journal.