

As a leader, talk is cheap. Action is what counts and practice makes a difference. Below are practical steps to improve performance.

- **Question everything.** Being a great leader is not much different from being a great documentary filmmaker like Jesse Andrew Clark, acclaimed filmmaker and director of *Chehalis: A Watershed Moment*. Question assumptions, starting with your own and working out toward others. Question your stereotypes about others and the assumptions you bring with you into every situation. All of these will hamper your ability to be objective.
- **Find of good mentor.** You've heard this before from other CEOs and guests on the podcast: don't go it alone. It takes a team and a village to get things right. The outside perspective of someone you admire can bring the most powerful learning. And don't be afraid to go after them to find the right one! Don't imagine a ceiling between you and people who are where you want to be. If you're serious about being a great leader and they're willing to mentor you, go for it.
- **Be a mentor to others.** This makes sense for multiple reasons. First, the best way to learn anything is by teaching it to others, making mentoring a great way to develop yourself. Second, good things come to those who give back and sow good seed. You didn't get where you are by yourself, so pay it forward to those who aspire to be where you are.
- **Give every stakeholder a seat at the table.** Jesse spoke at length about this while recounting bringing dozens of key stakeholders together for *Chehalis: A Watershed Moment*. Many of those stakeholders had strong opinions but felt ignored by those in authority. Don't make this mistake as CEO! In every issue, make sure key stakeholders have a seat at the table, then be wise enough to listen to each person's voice.
- **Keep your curiosity alive.** The best story-tellers – and leaders – maintain curiosity and willingness to learn. Even in moments of discomfort, stay curious and be open to what's possible, what you don't know, and what you might have missed.
- **Conflict moves the wheel forward.** While many avoid conflict, great leaders lean into it because they understand conflict is the driving force behind change. Not only is conflict inherent in humanity, but it also presents countless opportunities for learning and advancement.

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- **Build common ground wherever you can.** Great leaders know how to bring people together, so in any conflict look for what we might share in common. Finding commonality and helping others see it is the key to navigating through conflict in healthy ways.
 - **Follow Core Values when addressing different audiences.** Jesse spoke of the importance of understanding audiences to communicate effectively, but be careful not to sensationalize or manipulate the story – or your audience – just to sway people to your side of the argument. Collect the data, tell the story, stick to the facts, then allow people to form their own conclusions. As the messenger, follow your Core Values, be true to yourself, and recognize it's not about you alone.
 - **Lengthen your timeline.** With so many immediate pressures directly in front of you it's easy to develop a short-term perspective and focus on the squeaky wheels of today. Great leaders, however, never lose sight of the future. Expand your thinking to skip a generation. Heck, consider skipping multiple generations ahead and see what information or new thinking might come from it. Resist the temptation to shrink your perspective and become myopic about this next quarter.
 - **Learn to tell your story in multiple lengths of time.** This piece of advice comes from our discussion about knowing your audiences. Not everyone needs to know or will respond to the same story, so it's strategically helpful to develop multiple versions of your story, each with a different length in mind. Clearly, you have your strategic plan with a multiyear vision. From that, create a one-hour story, a thirty-minute story, a five-minute story, and so on down to a 10-second elevator pitch. Having each of these handy helps you connect to the varied audiences you lead.
 - **Leadership comes from nowhere.** This one may be counterintuitive since someone tapped you on the shoulder to lead the organization. However, many people hold the title of leader but fail to actually lead. At the end of the day, the motivation and passion to lead must come from within. Look to your Core Values to guide and encourage you.
 - **One of the more toxic things you can do is keep your head in the sand.** Whether it's about the external environment or the issues within your organization, don't ignore or deny what's going on. You're the senior leader, so ignoring chronic issues will result in a toxic culture.
 - **Think globally, act locally.** As you navigate any issue in your business, engage local boots on the ground to better connect physically with the communities you operate in and
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serve. Doing so will improve your effectiveness as a leader, storyteller, and one who gets things done.

- **A little humor goes a long way.** Leadership is tough stuff, and the issues you and your organization face can be challenging and draining. Remember to bring humor to it whenever you can. Humor is often the difference between breaking down and breaking through.
- **You'll never be able to understand everything.** This one feels like it should go without saying, yet many leaders mistakenly believe they must know everything. It's okay to admit you don't know things. In fact, that's better than pretending you know everything. Instead, learn to rely on others to fill in the many gaps that exist.
- **Sometimes you need to reexamine your Core Values.** We act on what we believe, and our core beliefs are at the root of it. But sometimes those need to be reexamined. Turn your curiosity on yourself and don't be afraid to evolve and be malleable.
- **Competition isn't always about beating the other person.** When presented right, competition can drive teams to great heights. But what do you do when there's no one to compete with? Here's where being introspective and having a growth-mindset can help you. Sometimes, the best competition is just trying to be better than you were yesterday.

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