

# Mind the Gap – Preparing to Lead

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Every morning we wake up. Are we preparing ourselves for tomorrow? Do we know how to manage oneself for mastery of the day? Do we wait for the day to unfold- take us on a whitewater ride of uncertainty? For many of us, the answer is an unequivocal “yes”! It’s easy to fail ourselves by addressing the urgent matters of doing what is required today, and ignoring the demands for personal reinvention. Preparing to lead begins with four simple D’s. Self-directed inquiry can help each of us become the leader more aligned to a rapidly shifting future.

Tomorrow’s challenges wait for no one. To serve, we each must prepare, anticipate, and declare our direction for personal growth and professional development. When we do, the surrounding fog clears to a view of how we might best contribute to people and organizations.



Managing oneself from simply “Being There” to “Becoming Tomorrow’s Leader” is not a process for the faint-hearted. Personal change is more of a commitment and passion than a rational process. The real difference in this leadership journey is recognizing the gap between who you are today, and what is required to master an emerging future. For personal change to take hold, there are at least four unmistakable ways we must recognize oneself in the mirror and decide what fits and what must go. We benefit from taking a holistic view of oneself before beginning our development journey. The plan must not only make sense, it must propel us from our current state into the leader we must become- even if we don’t know exactly how that process is going to unfold, and the degree we will be successful right away.

#### DECIDE

1. The first step is to make a choice- will I be content with myself as I am? Do I feel any sort of urgency within to make changes to my mindset, actions, and patterns? If the answer is no, then the choice has been made. If the evidence around you points to frustration, disappointment, and feeling less than successful in your professional activities, then ask yourself if you have sufficiently addressed the areas where you are feeling the “chafe”. Are those areas temporary, or will they continue to be present in your daily leadership life until you make choices about how to best show up as a leader. Are you adequately dissatisfied with today? Are you excited, passionate at all, even anxious to move forward with new choices? If so, make the decision to drive your own personal agenda for change. You must decide to either stay in the same patterns chosen for today or shift forward with anticipation of what is needed for the future challenges before you.

#### DECLARE

2. Have you expressed publicly your desire to change oneself to those most crucial to your success? Are you giving clues to those you need to support your development pathway? Before saying a word, consider who will candidly provide feedback and not shy away from telling you exactly what they see in you today. Let them know your commitment to preserve the change journey. Make certain that your declaration is beyond a circle of colleagues so timid that they will shelter feed back to preserve today’s cozy conditions. While declarations involve risks, people exercising observations and feedback will be positive influences on your leadership behavior. So, plan your own intervention. Invite the company of those who will candidly and respectfully engage in building the stories of occasional struggle and a growing evidence of successful beginnings.

#### DATA

3. Data- Build factual evidence that honestly and fairly measures your progress. Consider the scope and magnitude of your measurement. We are often our cruelest evaluators of success. Are we sabotaging our early actions to change due to unrealistic notions of success? Few human change actions are achieved simply and consistently. Are you permitting yourself to experiment and grow, and able to look even at shortfalls in results as the positive avenue to change? Are you allowing yourself a Mulligan or Redo? If you watch children closely in play, you’ll see they embrace trials of action, without notable self-deprecation and judgment.

Are you allowing yourself enough practice before measuring the results for keeps? When you have clarity on what you should measure and the meaningful frequency for testing your competence, the image in the mirror is about to change. Over time, routines that support new found habits become clear. Data can be discrete and measured in precise terms. Don't miss the opportunity to explore the Meta Case, or the bigger picture. Give yourself credit for what you see emerging as the new patterns supporting your success. Whether short or long-term, continually ask what ways can I improve my 20/20 view of self? Are there people I have not sought feedback from?

#### DISCIPLINE

4. Commit to finding the daily moments of truth. They are easy to find if we are honest. Consider the very moment when you have to make a choice that can either move you toward your goals, or destroy all momentum. Every day, make a commitment not to enact behaviors and attitudes that set you back on personal goal attainment. What is keeping you "stuck" exactly where you were yesterday? What deflates your passion to be someone else? Are you ready to check in the mirror and alter your course? Define the alternative actions you might choose to "unfreeze" your current state. Build clear and vivid descriptions of what you can see in oneself when you positively discipline your actions.

*Article by James F. Sheegog, based on the Four D coaching approach pioneered by Joan Roberts Eastman,  
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