



The Unwritten Rules for Young Developing Professionals

By Susan Cain, Ed.D.

Think about cultivating your career like you would a garden. Start with deciding what you want to grow, then chose opportunities wisely. I wish I had known about a few "basics" before I became a "senior" in my own career field. Here are wisdom bites I would like to share:

- 1. You have a full year while you are "new" to act new: Don't be afraid to ask for help, get your questions answered or just confirm a direction you are taking.** Simply explain that you are trying to learn and understand information that is new to you.
- 2. You will work harder for those you care about.** I grew up in the era when managers were told not everyone would like you, so focus on being respected by all. I believe that earned respect is still a foundation for successful leadership, however people will find the extra effort to help those they truly care about do well. Bonus tip. If you care about them, odds are they will care about you.
- 3. Results matter.** Leadership is a relationship between those that have the courage to lead and those that willingly follow. A follower will not fully invest in a leader's vision unless there is evidence the leader can get them there. Great leaders are great managers. They get things done. Relying on style and "presence" isn't enough. Followers look beyond the packaging for substance they can trust.
- 4. If you're feared, you'll fail.** Using your power to force other's compliance is a doomed strategy. Top talent won't stand for it; they leave. People will feed you only "safe" information and eventually you'll be clueless. Team members will not take risks,

and growth will be stagnated. You're really not that powerful anyway. Even the mighty fall when those around them fail to hold them up.

5. Performance requires deliberate practice. Be mindful of your development and recognize that the best leaders are the best learners. The pace of change in our world is so great that yesterday's skills are no longer enough to keep us ahead of the game.

6. It starts and ends with people. Make time in your schedule to really get to know your team, your coworkers, your bosses, your customers, and those in your community. You cannot lead those you do not know. Go have a conversation with someone important to your vision, now. Preferably, non-work related. It is their effort, not yours, that will eventually determine whether you win or lose

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