



# Leadership Tips and Tools

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Leadership does not reside solely in the hands of a few top executives on our campuses. Post-secondary organizations thrive on a dynamic give-and-take among all constituents to achieve their goals. The success of our colleges depends on flexibility of communication and leadership across the vertical divides and from every level.

Upward leadership assures that communication arrives from all points and all levels within the college. Leading up applies at every level. Opportunities for leading up come to all of us.

Once established, a college-wide culture of leading upward can serve as a kind of inertial guidance system, continually reminding all of us that we are obliged to provide leadership regardless of our positions within the college.

Leading up is not a one-way street to the top. Upward leadership requires an ability to work in all directions at once. According to Michael Useen, “leading up isn’t about rebellion or usurpation; it is about stepping into the breach when there is no one else to do it and about listening to such leadership when it emerges.”

While we look for ways of leading up, we must also give others the means of leading up. Building the capacity for upward leadership in ourselves and others requires an appreciation, knowledge, and skill for the measures that can make a difference in upward leadership. This issue of Leadership Tips and Tools is devoted to:

## Leading UP!

***The 360°Leader!*** In his latest book, John C. Maxwell, argues that “99% of all leadership in most organizations takes place in the middle.” Maxwell encourages us to be 360° leaders who realize that the secret to leadership is to think *influence*, not *position*. Maxwell takes us through the myths of leadership and helps us understand a comprehensive list of principles to increase our influence in leading up, across, and down. He points out that when we begin to practice the qualities of influence, we will be ready to take on one of our toughest leadership tasks: leading up.

**Connect Up!** Invest in relationship chemistry with your leader. “The quality of the relationship you have with your leader will impact your success or failure. It is certainly worth investing in,” says Maxwell. Investing in relationship chemistry affirms Kouzes and Posner’s primary tenant in *The Leadership Challenge* that “leadership is a relationship.”

The conversations we have with our leaders contribute to the relationship. These conversations, formal or informal, are not about the relationship—these conversations *are* the relationship. Our conversations with our leaders translate into our ongoing dialogue and are essential to the success of our relationships.

**Appreciate UP!** When was the last time you communicated your appreciation to your leader? Sometimes the most important thing we can do is to connect up and invest in relational chemistry by saying . . . *I appreciate this about you. This thing you do. The way you handled that situation.* When we are sincere in doing this with our leader, we forge a powerful bond in our relationship.

**Communicate with Clarity!** Have you ever felt frustrated with the results of your attempts to communicate? Have you ever felt like this:

“What I *get* to say is not what I *want* to say,  
 is not what they *listen* to,  
 is not what they *hear*,  
 is not what they *understand*,  
 is not what they *remember* when I’m gone.

*What do I want them to remember  
 when I’m gone?*

I need to say that, and only  
 that...clearly!”

--Susan Scott

**Your Stump Speech!** If you want to lead up, you need a stump speech—the speech you must be prepared to give anytime, anywhere, to anyone—especially your leader! Your stump speech must be powerful, clear, and brief. Your stump speech is crucial for leading up! Your leader’s time is valuable. You may only get a limited amount of it. There are four key components of a stump speech:

This is where we are going.

This is why we are going there.

This is who is going with us.

This is how we’re going to get there.

Prepare your stump speech and be ready to deliver it repeatedly to convey a clear and compelling story about your vision, your team, your department, or college. Here’s the key: Can you deliver your stump speech in 60 seconds or less?

**Clear Answers!** Great leaders provide clear answers according to Marcus Buckingham in *The One Thing You Need to Know*. Leading up requires clear answers. You may find that your best 60-second stump speech provides clear answers to Buckingham’s four key questions:

**Who do we serve?** Focus attention on serving one specific, core group. By serving this core group, the team, department, or college can better serve other groups as well.

**What is our core strength?** People want one clear and specific strength that will enable success.

**What is our core score?** Leaders need one, simple, clear metric for measuring progress and to rally the team, department, or college around.

**What actions can we take today?** According to Buckingham, great leaders provide a few very specific and unambiguous actions that can be taken immediately.

*“If you want to build a ship, don’t gather your people and ask them to provide wood, prepare tools, assign tasks. Call them together and raise in their minds the longing for the endless sea.”*

--- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

**Emotional Wake!** Our emotional wake determines the story that is told about each of us when we leave the “room.” Our long-term performance is profoundly affected by our emotional wake. What emotional wake do you leave behind with your leader?

**Speak Truth to Power!** Leading up requires speaking truth to power. We speak truth to power when we advocate a position clearly and succinctly, illustrate a position by sharing the facts or thinking behind it, and inquire into the views of our leaders and actively explore their thinking. Speaking truth to power requires thoughtful preparation.

**Name the issue!** A popular TV host reminds us that “we have to name it to claim it!” This is the first step in speaking truth to power. Name the issue and identify a specific example that illustrates the issue. Clarify what is at stake for you, your team, department, or the college before identifying the contributions you (or your department) are willing to make to the issue. Be clear about your wishes with regard to this issue. Just like the stump speech, you have sixty seconds to do it all before inviting your leader to respond. *Fierce Conversations* by Susan Scott provides more detail into this conversation model. Speaking truth to power allows us to confront tough issues with courage, compassion, and skill. Learning is provoked, conversations are real, and relationships are enriched.

**Start with Heart!** Begin high-risk discussions with the right motives and stay focused no matter what happens. If something your leader says or does triggers an emotional state, become a crucible—a strong, resilient vessel in which profound conversations can safely take place. Maintain your hope for the conversation and leading up by staying focused on the relationship and the issue.

**Managing OR Leading?** Should we be managing up or leading up? Michael Useen, author of *Leading Up*, says we must do both. “Managing up strengthens the organization; leading up can save it when the peril is greatest and the right course of action is most difficult to see.”

Sometimes we see managing and leading as exclusive spheres, each following its own logic with a unique talent and a separate purpose. However different managing and leading might be conceptually, the truth is, we in post-secondary organizations must do both. Without successful managing up, we lack the structural sinew that holds the day-to-day processes and individualized attention for serving our students, colleagues, and communities together; without successful leading up, we forfeit the courage and the creativity that can come from anywhere in the college to forge the conversations that matter.

*“All of us can reach entirely new levels of possibility together . . . . To achieve this, we need to begin these conversations about purpose and shared significance and commit to staying in them. As we stay in the conversation, people start to work together rather than convince each other of who has more of the truth. We are capable of creating wonderful and vibrant communities when we discover what dreams of possibility we share. And always, those dreams become much greater than anything that was ever available when we were isolated from each other.”*

--Margaret Wheatley