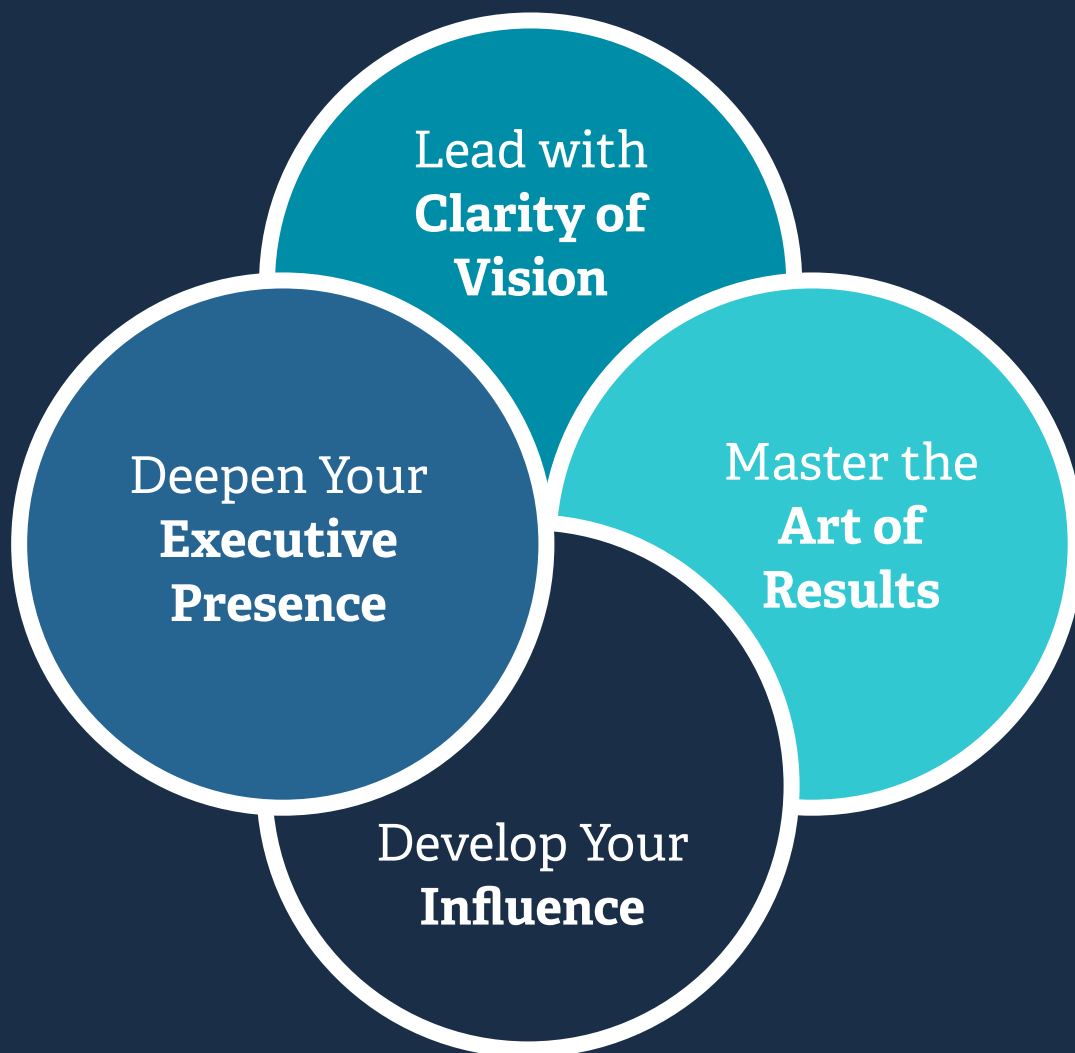


▶ The High Performance Leader

How a few executives and directors rise to the top and why the rest don't



Dr. Jo Ilfeld, PhD, CEO Incite to Leadership

WHAT CEOS AND SENIOR LEADERS WHO GET THE BEST WORK OUT OF THEIR PEOPLE KNOW THAT YOU DON'T—AND HOW YOU CAN USE IT TO BUILD A HIGH-PERFORMING TEAM OF YOUR OWN.

DEVELOP YOURSELF TO EFFECTIVELY LEAD CHANGE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A leader's effectiveness, reputation, and ability to achieve their vision largely rely on their ability to lead, influence and manage other people. Which is a wake up call for many, as they realize the definition of "work" has expanded — and now includes the interpersonal and intrapersonal business of relating to, communicating with, and inspiring people. For CEOs and others in senior leadership, this reality creates three specific needs: the need to grow your ability to delegate and influence; the need to express yourself clearly to a broader group of individuals; and the need to read and respond in new ways to how your staff is responding to you. This report provides several tools and strategies to get you started.

You've been determined and dedicated. Hard work and long hours have taken you from a starting point of doing good technical work to larger responsibilities, management, and leading new initiatives. But now you can't work any harder. And there seems to be a recurring issue, which despite your best efforts, you just aren't sure how to solve. For many leaders, the recurring issue has something to do with their people. Or, to be more specific, how they relate, manage, and interact with the array of situations that arise when people work together to accomplish their goals.

Maybe it's a personality conflict between two staff members. Maybe it's that you lose your temper with people, or that you collapse when you need to take a stand. Maybe it's that you don't feel like you're enough of an expert for your job title. Or that you're exhausted, because every time you try to delegate work to someone else, you end up spending too much time managing the process to get it done right. Or maybe it's simply that, underneath it all, you know you—and your employees—are capable of so much more.

This report is your first step to clearing your head and establishing leadership excellence. Because from here on out, your results largely depend on your ability to get work done through other people. So let's get started.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

In my work with seasoned executives and rising leaders, we focus on their development in four main areas:

Lead with Clarity of Vision

Know the big picture and align your actions with those goals.

Master the Art of Results

Shift how you manage time, tasks, and people for maximum impact.

Develop Your Influence

Cultivate the communication skills and habits which move people to action.

Deepen Your Executive Presence

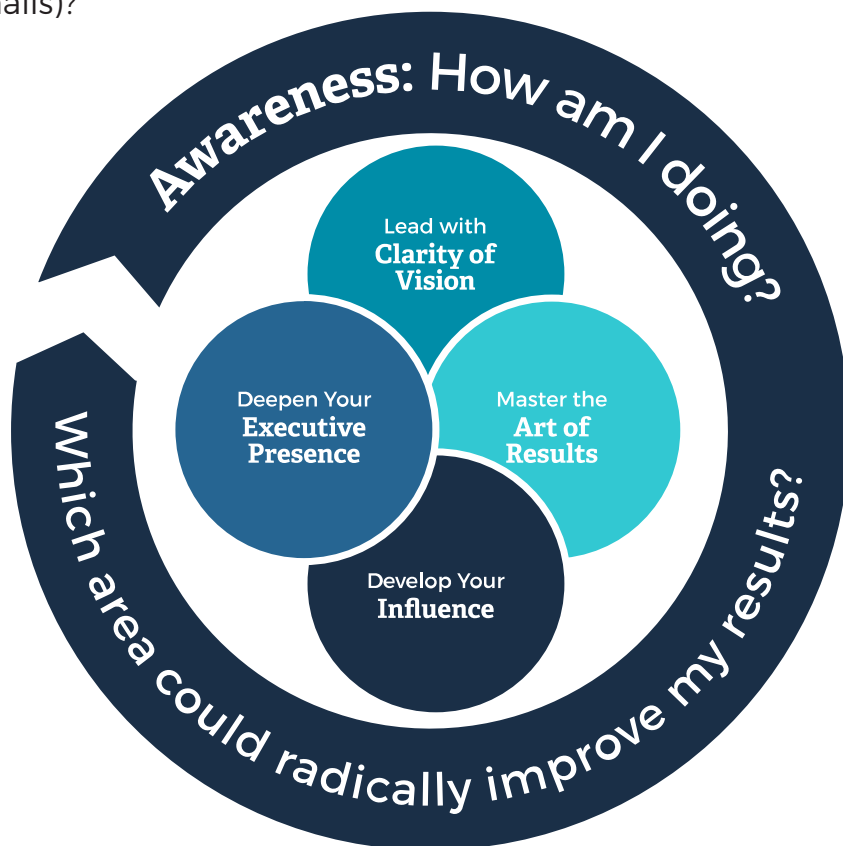
Use your physical presence and confidence to engage and enroll others.

But on the ground, the questions I am most often asked are:

- How do I influence others without coming across as bossy or manipulative?
- How do I effectively enroll my direct reports in my vision so they become more self-directed... and I can stop micromanaging?
- How can I more thoughtfully respond to personality conflicts among my team so that it stops wasting so much of everyone's time?
- The people on my team report to others. So how do I get them to work on my project first (or simply return my calls and emails)?
- I want to start coaching my team to function and make smart decisions without me. How do I do that?

I've created this report as a reference containing three of the essential skills that I work with professionals to master so they become the wise, successful leaders they are here to be. Use the practice exercises to identify which area is ripest for improvement.

Typically, there is one area that really rings true for you. Start there.



1

HIGH-PERFORMANCE LEADERS MASTER CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS

The higher you are in your company, the greater your level of responsibility.

This is not surprising. But what can come as a surprise to many executives is the increasing number of people they must interact with to accomplish their goals.

Whether your role comes with direct customer interaction, a functional working group or a seat on the executive team, there is a premium on clear communication with those around you. Here's what you need to know:

Often what you are saying and what the other person is hearing are not the same.

No one wants to have a communication misfire in a group meeting with the whole team watching—or find out with no time to spare that a key deliverable is missing important elements. Read on to see where you might be guilty of unclear communication -- and learn how to

HOW DO HIGH-PERFORMANCE LEADERS COMMUNICATE

THEY STATE DIRECT REQUESTS – NOT OPEN-ENDED DESIRES

What They Used To Say	I'd love if you guys could keep me updated on your conversations with XYZ company so I know how things are going.
What The Team Heard	I'd like to know when something important is happening with XYZ company, so when that happens – send me an update.
What Happened	They believe that they only need to keep you, the leader, updated when something significant happens and you believe you've instructed them to keep you in the loop about XYZ company on a regular basis. You end up frustrated that your team members aren't communicating with you and they end up surprised at your reaction to their non-news.
What They Learned To Say Instead	Jeff and Susan, please make sure you send me a weekly update on your conversations and progress with XYZ company.

THEY MAKE REQUESTS WITH CLEAR PARAMETERS

(SO IT'S EASY TO KNOW WHEN THEIR NEEDS HAVE BEEN MET)

- What They Used To Say** I need you to finish the code for the new website feature before the big software launch on January 23rd.
- What The Team Heard** If you could have some text for the feature on the homepage and the bare bones of the feature running by midnight on January 23rd, that would be great for our launch.
- What Happened** Your website developer comes down with the flu (it is January after all) and writes you an email stating he won't be able to have the new site feature fully functional by January 23rd. He will, however, pop your text and a beta version onto the home page template by that date so you should be set for your big launch date.
- What They Learned To Say Instead** Susan, please complete all necessary formatting to the new text and all the design elements so they fit in seamlessly with the full website. And please make sure the new website features are completely functional before our January 23rd launch. I actually need it to be completely done a few days earlier so I can test it and make sure it works—and give you enough time to complete any tweaks or fixes before our launch. Can you complete all these design and implementation elements in time?

THEY MAKE A REQUEST INSTEAD OF A COMPLAINT

- What They Used To Say** My team has had a hard time reaching Matt from Marketing to get the data I need for my report.
- What The Team Heard** We're working really hard to get in touch with Matt and I'm sure we'll connect soon so I can get you the full analysis and report you need, as promised.
- What Happened** Matt finally gets the numbers to your team two weeks late and you all wind up working through the weekend and several late nights in a row because you don't want to disappoint your client or destroy your company's reputation for the future .
- What They Learned To Say Instead** My team needs to complete this full marketing analysis and report before the board meeting. If you can't ensure that your direct report Matt calls me back and gives me the information I need to do my analysis, I don't know if I can give you the full deliverables on time that were promised in our consulting contract.

Learning to make clear and direct requests which build relationships and foster open communication is a challenge for every leader. But addressing this master skill often unlocks the possibility of mastering the skills of being an effective delegator and having “real” time off.

If you're coming up against persistent staff irritations, it's time to devote more attention to clarity. The next time you need to give instructions to a team member, think over in advance what you want to say. Ask yourself, “Am I asking for a clear action? Have I outlined clear parameters and deadlines? Are there any details missing from my request that are pertinent to the results I'm asking for?” Before you know it, you'll be a clarity machine and the effectiveness of your work style and your leadership will make a huge leap forward.

***“THE SINGLE BIGGEST PROBLEM WITH
COMMUNICATION IS THE ILLUSION THAT
IT HAS TAKEN PLACE.”***

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



2

HIGH-PERFORMANCE LEADERS DELEGATE BETTER

For many, it can be hard to let go of tasks or whole projects. It can also be quite a challenge to make the space to set expectations, monitor performance and give (and get!) feedback from others. But high-performance leaders find a way to maintain their high standards—and effectively engage others in getting the work done right.

Many senior executives don't actually know how to effectively get work done through other people, so they resort to old-school command-and-control tactics, or they avoid leading altogether. Therefore, you must make a decision: are you willing to do what it takes to delegate and cultivate the trust and talents of your people... or are you going to "pretend" to lead?

The key is to get into a mindset of making sure you have the time to actively influence and cultivate your team members, not just manage and coordinate their responsibilities.

Get to know your staff. Learn their strengths and what interests them. Sometimes delegating is as simple as knowing which junior team member is appropriate for which task. Start handing over certain tasks which you are currently doing to more junior team members. Commit to a thorough initial training, and make sure to follow up on their progress.

RATE YOUR DELEGATION SKILL

How many of the following
statements can you honestly check?

☐

I thoughtfully delegate tasks and projects so I have the time I need to cultivate my team.

☐

I have systems in place to get employees trained and up-to-speed on new tasks. I send off one email to my assistant and know it will be done.

☐

My staff is worth their weight in gold.

☐

I never do the same task repeatedly on a daily/weekly basis.

☐

I have time blocked off for my own strategic thinking and planning work on a weekly basis.

HIGH-PERFORMANCE LEADERS DON'T



Feel pressured every time a team member enters their office to talk because they have so much they still need to do.



Think, “It’s faster to do it myself than to explain it in detail to someone else.”



Spend hours formatting text and pictures on their slide presentations and/or preparing reports.



Find themselves doing administrative tasks thinking, “I can’t believe I’m spending my time on this. . . ”

As you begin delegating, your next challenge will be to fill your newly-created hours with time dedicated to strategizing and innovating in your new role, as well as fostering positive team dynamics. Don’t farm out one set of tasks just so you can do other busy work at your desk!

Your reward? Once you’ve mastered this skill, you can start to train your managers and supervisors how to master it so every level of your organization is carefully cultivating the next generation of company leaders.

I guarantee that once you start to effectively delegate tasks and utilize the strengths and skills of your direct reports, their loyalty to you will strengthen your team’s performance and reputation.

THE DELEGATION EXERCISE

1. Set a timer for 5-10 minutes.
2. Go through your to-do list and star every task which does not need to be done by you. Be realistic here—you might not be as irreplaceable as you’d like to believe. Stretch and see which other tasks can you also star?
3. Go back through the starred items and pick one item you find yourself doing repeatedly—whether it is daily or even monthly.
4. Brainstorm three new solutions: either possible staff members who are ready to grow that you can outsource this item to, or potential new ways the task could get done.

While it’s amazing how many apps there are out there to do tasks you can only imagine, sometimes an eager intern or junior staff member would be happy to find or create an automated solution for you as well.

3

HIGH-PERFORMANCE LEADERS KNOW FEEDBACK IS NOT THE SAME AS FAILURE

To manage others well, you have to be able to give—and receive—feedback. It's a two-way street that many executives and senior leaders attempt to avoid. This is a mistake.

So often, people associate negative feedback with failure. This is not the case. If you make a habit of avoiding feedback because it feels like failure, you're getting mediocre results at best. Excellence in leadership—like in any other pursuit—involves exposing yourself to failure, feedback, and yes, even vulnerability. You don't get to stay in your comfort zone and be a high-performance leader. So, which one is more important to you?

If you make a habit of avoiding feedback because it feels like failure, you're getting mediocre results at best.

The key to giving feedback well is two-fold. **First, give both positive and negative feedback.** And make sure you give more praise than critiques. Research shows that a ratio of 5 positive interactions to every negative interaction is necessary to create a high-performing team. This doesn't mean you can't correct along the way; you just have to balance those corrections with noticing what your team is doing well. This keeps them motivated and receptive to your observations.



Second, give feedback which is not only actionable but measurable. Often, feedback sounds like this, “I need you to be more proactive in your work.” But what does that really mean?

High-performance leaders know this, and so they are clear about what the desired behavior actually looks like. They may say something like, “I

need you to be more proactive. This means that when I send you questions via email, I'd love an answer back from you within one day. Also, please don't come to me with problems only. If you need to bring me an issue, bring your recommendation for how to solve it."

Where "being more proactive" is hard to measure, both people can see whether emails are being replied to within 24 hours and if suggestions are being made. Now, when you are the person receiving feedback, there are two important things to remember.

First, it's helpful to keep in mind what feedback is not. Feedback about your work is not a judgment of you personally. And it is not a failure.

Feedback is guidance for improvement.

When someone gives you feedback, do whatever it takes to listen without defensiveness. Nothing ruins your leadership presence more than getting overly defensive when presented with areas for improvement.

If that's a stretch, leadership body language expert Wendy Palmer recommends picturing the feedback landing on the table in front of both of you, so the words are between you, not heaped onto you personally.

Feedback about your work is not a judgment of you personally. And it is not a failure.

The second thing to keep in mind is—just as you need to give measurable feedback—to make sure you ask for it as well. When presented with feedback, ask "How can I put this feedback into practice to benefit my staff and the company?" This allows you to ask for

specifics and also points to the fact that you are open to improving as you guide your team, and the company, to better results.

Even though I just shared some challenging skills with you, there's one other secret I think you need to know as well.



CHOICE POINT: BACK TO YOUR OLD WAY OF DOING THINGS?

You actually don't need to master all three of these skills to achieve radically different results and get the best work from your people—but I do believe you need to at least be traveling along the path of mastery for true success.

Sometimes just looking down the road to where you want to be and taking the first steps can yield impressive results in your own life and in your work.

Typically, people tell me that one of these skills is the real pinch point for them. I invite you to take a moment to reflect on which area is ripest for improvement for you. Feel free to drop me a line at Jo@InciteToLeadership.com and share anytime—I'm always interested in continuing the conversation.

If you'd like to explore working with me, the first step is to schedule a strategy session. These are confidential, complimentary consultations where you'll have the space to discuss your current leadership style as well as your current challenges. We'll explore some simple things you can do right now to start developing the way you respond to and lead your team, so you get the results you envision. Email me at Jo@InciteToLeadership.com or call me at **510.402.6224**.

I'm here to serve thoughtful and innovative leaders and their teams to build strategic organizations that get results. And it can start now, if you want it to.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Jo Ilfeld". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Jo Ilfeld, PhD, is an executive leadership coach who works with C-suite leaders, executives and high potential managers to create more impact and influence in their organizations.

She works with individuals, teams, and organizations on four core areas of leadership development: leading with clarity of vision, mastering the art of results, developing influence, and deepening your executive presence. Jo's clients have come from leading Bay Area companies including EBay, BioMarin, Gilead, Genentech, and Blue Shield of California as well as many small to medium-sized companies and non-profit organizations. Jo is also a professor of Leadership Intelligence in the executive MBA program at Sonoma State. Prior to founding Incite to Leadership, Jo grew her first company into a million dollar business. She is a graduate of Yale College and holds a PhD in Business from UC Berkely.