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15 smart daily habits every leader should adopt

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A person's habits can tell you a lot about them. As a leader, it's important to develop healthy routines that not only boost your productivity but also motivate you to keep learning and growing in your career.

We asked a panel of Business Journals Leadership Trust members to share some daily habits they think every leader should adopt. Read on for their top 15 habits and why each one is so beneficial.

1. Remember your motivation.

Remember why you do it. Every day I try to spend time with my two boys. They keep me grounded and motivated. When I hear about their dreams or watch them follow their passions I remember why I work so hard. – Donald Donnaldson, Beantown Builders, Inc.

2. Establish daily conversations with your team.

Talk to your team every day, even during the lockdown. We established a daily morning "standup" via Zoom that keeps us connected when we can't all be together. It's a great way to start the day with alignment and purpose for you and the whole team. – Steve Banfield, Simplata Technologies

3. Make time to let your mind work.

It doesn't have to be meditation, but it's of critical importance to let the mind do its thing. If a leader is constantly beholden to crisis management and reactive decision-making, she or he will be unable to see clearly enough to make correct decisions. Simply put, it is important to take the time to simply think. – Jake Norris, Oakwood Search

4. Read every day.

I've begun reading for an hour a day — real books! Allowing space for that hour of focused reading and learning results in less stress and a better personal balance, and it has let me generate ideas to apply to my company. Best of all, we're starting a Batch book club internally this summer so more team members can read. – Sam Davidson, Batch

5. Introduce yourself to everyone you work with.

I see great value in taking the time to get to know everyone at our company, whether they're a summer engineering intern in a different department or a temporary IT professional at the opposite end of the office. This not only helps reduce the stress associated with daily (sometimes socially awkward) interactions, it also provides comfort and motivation to the staff, and a comfortable employee is a productive employee. With over 100 employees at our firm, I set a goal to meet or speak to a staff member outside of my department each workday. Set a similar goal and, depending on the size of your company, you'll be surprised at how quickly you get through the entire staff. – Daniel Biru, Korda/Nemeth Engineering, Inc.

6. Create balance through boundaries.

Put the pen down and close the laptop! There is never a shortage of work, and as entrepreneurs, we tend to overwork ourselves. But the best habit you can form as an entrepreneur is to create balance for yourself. I've used mindfulness and meditation to help me disconnect from work and reconnect with the body and presence. My suggestion is to set boundaries on your work time and take five minutes to meditate and reconnect with your body. – Yohannan Terrell, Warhol & WALL ST.

7. Unplug.

Each day, I try and make time to unplug and give mindful attention to my daily and long-term goals. This means closing my office door for 30 minutes, during which time I restrain myself from checking email or my phone and focus on revisiting the goals I have set for myself. – Brian Boone, Hylant

Business Journals Leadership Trust is an invitation-only network of influential business leaders, executives and entrepreneurs in your community. *Do I qualify?*

8. Review industry and government news.

My daily habit right now is reviewing the news — both news related to my industry and news that is adjacent to my industry, as well as any governmental actions being taken. It helps me with my short-term planning during this time. It also arms me with the information I need to know to communicate any changes in our services and programs. – Muriel Smith, De La Salle, Inc.

9. Use a calendar instead of a to-do list.

Something that has always been big with me is time management. I make sure that I set aside time in my calendar for certain tasks so nothing gets swept under the rug. If you put them on a calendar rather than a to-do list, you will be more organized with completing those tasks because you know at what time you should be doing each item on your agenda. You are less likely to forget about a task if you organize yourself in this way. At the end of the day, you will feel like you accomplished so much more than with a simple to-do list. – Brandy McCombs, IBC

10. Be curious about your business.

Success is a collective endeavor, so leaders should “fly at a higher level” and look beyond their role or division. The key to this is being curious and spending some time every day engaging some aspect of the business or your industry that’s new to you. You’ll demonstrate to your team that learning is a continuous process and you’ll inspire that behavior in others. – Casey Schuchart, Schuchart

11. Take a moment to be thankful.

It is so easy to dive right into our challenges and tasks every day without first reminding ourselves of the bigger picture. Be grateful that we have a job and that we get the opportunity to help lead organizations and be part of a team. Be thankful we are healthy and safe and don't need to worry about going hungry. Take that moment to reset your perspective, then go at your day with the intention to make the world a slightly better place than it was yesterday. – Scott Lingren, Schunk Xycarb Technology Inc.

12. Prioritize physical and mental health.

First thing each morning I make it a point to get my personal and mental health under control via a morning workout and to prioritize my single most pressing business item. From there, I can focus on “walking the floor” to ensure our employees have what they need to be successful, which is really what a leader's job should be. This has allowed me to be much more present with our staff. – Thomas Golczynski, Assured Flow Solutions

13. Practice self-reflection.

Being in sync with your values and making sure that you stay true to yourself in everything you do is one of the most important habits every business leader needs to adopt. It's important because it helps you remain authentic no matter which flows you get in, and it keeps you grounded as well. Always take a moment to analyze what decisions you took, whose lives you impacted in a positive way and whether you did the best you could on this day. – Solomon Timothy, OneIMS

14. Feed your mind.

What you put in is what you get out, whether that's in relation to your body, relationship, career or mindset. The single best habit you can adopt is that of personal development. You are, and will always be, your best asset. Invest in yourself through the books you read, the seminars and classes you attend, the coaches you hire, and the podcasts you listen to. All of these deposits into your personal and professional development will pay dividends far greater than the investment of time and money you put in. You will reap the rewards forever! – Jodi Low, U & Improved

15. Stay curious, and keep learning.

Learn something new every day! Being curious about the world expands the mind, and learning and applying a new skill can boost your productivity and help maximize your most valuable asset — time. – Jeremiah McKinley, Cascadia Group