

SAM – Strategic Alignment Method

The 10 Commandments of Ethical Leadership

SAM groups the *Ten Commandments of Ethical Leadership* into four strategies that will allow you to systematically improve your leadership capability.

It is a four-step process. Three of the steps are about you, and one is about others. The foundational truth that applies here is that you can't lead anyone else until you can successfully lead yourself. If you are strong in self-leadership, you most likely can successfully manage anyone, any time, in any situation.



When it comes to ethics, the main thing to remember is that it's about the leader. The beliefs we have and the actions we take as a result of those beliefs, tell a tale about who we are. The benefits of being an ethical leader, one who does the right things for the right reasons, is that when we lead from a position of true integrity, people will follow us. Even when times are tough and the going gets rough, there will always be a band of loyal followers behind the ethical leader.

Not only will there never be any shortage of followers for this type of leader, there will never be any shortage of customers for this type of company. Many people errantly believe that being ethical costs money and loses customers. In the short term, you may lose a client or two. But believe me, the supporters and customers you lose when you do the right thing, are the ones you didn't want in the first place. These are the ones that typically turn out to be very high maintenance, tend not to be nearly as profitable on the bottom line, and may even be the thorn in your side down the road that causes untold sorrows. So if you lose one or two in the short-term, count your blessings, because they've just saved you a bundle of money by not bringing their baggage on board your bus.

The concepts are simple and easy to follow. For some of them, you'll need additional help and resources. There are many fine organizations that work specifically with the things you need to implement this process, so be sure to seek out someone who believes in you and your potential, and who really and truly wants to help you be the most amazing leader you can possibly be. Above all, take the journey with integrity.

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Step 1 – Define You

I Develop a Vision

Every successful company has a vision of some sort. Your ability to define, articulate and breathe life into your vision will significantly impact your ability to mobilize your team to action. Much of the power in this step is in developing the vision. The work that you will need to do in order to get to the point of vivid articulation will do wonders in inspiring you and igniting the passion in your heart. You then need to take that passion and transfer it from your heart to the hearts of those on your team. You do this by talking about it, sharing stories about it and living it.

II Characterize Integrity

Defining your integrity and your character gives you consistency in your decisions and your actions. Each leader needs to identify their core beliefs and values. There are many core beliefs that cut across all cultures, like truth and justice, but what about the others? We also need to be able to prioritize our beliefs because inner conflict often occurs when we have to choose between two things we believe in. That's when we need some objective help in making decisions. If we've identified what's most important to us and in what order, and we've done that during non-crisis times, it can help us during emotionally-charged times when our objective judgment can be impaired.

III Lead the Way

Your actions say more about you than anything. Your actions must align with your thoughts and your words. An ethical leader can't say one thing and do another. You must be willing and able to walk your talk. It starts with being able to articulate what your integrity 'looks like'. Can you describe what 'honesty' looks like at a very specific and behavioural level? Does it mean telling the truth no matter what? Or is it more important to not hurt anyone's feeling in the process of telling the truth? Once you know the associated behaviour with each of your values, now you can determine if you're walking your talk, and even measure it if need be. All that's left is the execution - the follow through, of what your words said to begin with. Of course, we all know that's the hardest part.

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Step 2 – DEVELOP YOU

IV Esteem Insight

Each person has different gifts and talents. It's not always easy to know what they are, but it's up to us to figure out what they are for us, and then develop and use them. Part of what makes this journey difficult is that it takes real courage to define what we're good at, simply because the exercise forces us to define what we're not good at. Whether through self-reflection and investigation, or through receiving feedback from others, it's important to understand the strengths and weaknesses inherent in our own personality. This can help you discover your true calling, and make a huge difference in your personal development. Also take the time to figure out your best learning style, your conflict handling style and the key drivers that cause you to resist change. Often when we take a deep, hard look in the mirror, we don't like what we see. It takes courage to recognize our own reflection, and then do something proactively about the things we don't like.

V Love Learning

Today's job security is all about the ability to learn, and learn quickly. The world is changing at such a rapid pace that the knowledge that got you to yesterday will soon be obsolete and not able to get you to tomorrow. A great leader must continually learn and grow. Innovation demands constant change and constant change demands constant learning. Loving learning begins with understanding your natural learning style, and working with it, instead of against it. When you do, you'll find that you learn faster and retain more with less effort. Now learning is a tremendously enjoyable task.

VI Guard Your Heart

Being an Ethical Leader means you'll sometimes have to take a stand when no one else is on your side. You'll need courage to remain standing for what you believe in. As the leader your people will sometimes balk at your coaching and despite your best efforts, will disappoint you and turn on you. That can sometimes be painful. When people come against us, our ideas and our values, it can be difficult to not take it personally. But that's exactly what we must not do. Once we take things personally, we get mad, we get offended and we lose sight of what's really important. Above all, we must not take the words that others say to us or about us, to heart. We lessen our ability to make rational decisions, and that can be the undoing of even the strongest Ethical Leader.

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Step 3 – DEVELOP OTHERS

VII Invest Wisely

How you invest your personal resources (physical, mental and emotional) will have a major impact on how long you are able to sustain your success. The truth is, there will never be enough of you to go around and you must sometimes make some hard decisions about what you'll do, when, and with whom. Be sure to invest your time in people and activities that provide a return on your investment. Spending time on your trouble areas or in crisis mode may seem important at the time, but if it doesn't give you much of a return on your investment, it's an unwise use of time. On the other hand, when you invest in your greatest opportunity people and projects, now you're making a smart investment.

VIII Exercise Humility

Humility is not about being weak, timid or permissive. It is about having the strength of character to see that while you may have strengths that others do not, that doesn't make you a better person. Humility is about controlling your pride, and not becoming arrogant. Humility is about valuing the contributions of others, no matter how big or how small. Humility is always about making other people feel special when they are around you. Humility is being teachable, regardless of who the teacher may be. Like a muscle in the body, it takes regular exercise to keep both our successes and our failures from going to our heads, and distorting our vision. A great leader knows that it's not about them, it's about the people who follow them.

IX Leverage Loyalty.

Loyalty exists when a strong relationship exists between the leader and the follower. It exists when the follower believes without a shadow of doubt that the leader has their best interests, and their future, at heart. Loyalty is a direct manifestation of the amount of trust and respect you have earned. To earn this degree of loyalty, you must be a strong servant leader. You must be willing to help your people be the best they can be and you will create a rapport that will stand the test of time and will weather any storm.

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Step 4 – Believe

X Believe

This is what sets Ethical Leaders apart from all other leaders. They understand that belief is a powerful universal force that can turn any situation into a victorious one. You must have faith in four areas.

1. A higher power
2. Your company (and it's product or service)
3. Your people
4. Yourself

Faith is not something you get once and then you've got it forever. It is something that must be nurtured and tended to. You must hear stories and see images over and over again. That's what will keep it alive. Make sure you consciously plant things into your belief system that are in line with what you believe. Don't do *nothing*. Even in a garden, when you plant nothing, you get weeds.

SAM, as the process is defined, is a never-ending, cyclical journey for personal and professional development. Once you've completed all the levels, the journey is not over. In fact, for some, it's only just begun. Once you've made some progress and experienced some growth, begin again. Redefine yourself. Things may not have changed much, but chances are high that your perspectives and beliefs have matured along with you. You must always take that learning you've done and leverage it by raising not only your performance bar, but that of others as well. Life is a never-ending journey, and we are either shrinking or growing. Nothing in nature stands still, including us. So take control of your destiny by choosing your path, instead of letting your path choose you.

Bottom line: Leadership is about others. Ethics is about you!