Meta-Leadership Toolkit

This document contains a sample of the Meta-Leadership tools we teach in our training programs. It provides a picture of what you will learn and how you can apply new skills to both your professional career and personal life. To learn more about these tools and many more register today for one of our programs. The NPLI offers a variety of online and residential courses to fit your needs.
A SUITE OF TOOLS FOR LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

Meta-leadership in Practice
The Character of the Meta-leader
Building Capability to Connect and Act
Building Capability to Adapt & Respond
Meta-Leadership Traps

THE FRAMEWORK
YOU THE META-LEADER
TRANSACTING
TRANSFORMING
WHAT TO AVOID

The Meta-Leadership Toolkit contains 13 tools and frameworks to equip you to think and act as an effective meta-leader. Each has been developed through extensive research and field validation. Used together, these assets help you navigate complex situations and create the environment in which you and your team deliver sustainable high performance to meet or exceed mission requirements.

NPLI executive education programs explore these tools in depth, providing opportunities to apply them in scenario-based activities and other active learning exercises. Visit our Crisis Leadership Training webpage.
Meta-Leadership in Practice

Meta-Leadership is a guide for solving complex problems involving numerous stakeholders. This is clearly the case when responding to a complex crisis. The “Meta-" prefix describes an overarching grasp of problems as well as a broad perspective on potential solutions. Organizations today are less hierarchical and more oriented toward inter-dependence with other entities. Therefore, successful leaders expand their thinking, influence and activity beyond the formal bounds of their organizational authority.

The definition and metric of Meta-Leadership is “People Follow You.” Those people include a boss, peers, subordinates as well as other stakeholders, including the public. There are three dimensions of Meta-Leadership:

**Meta-Leadership describes a way to think and behave.**

**The Person**

Meta-Leaders aspire to sound character and high Emotional Intelligence. They are grounded in *who* they are and *why* they lead.

**The Situation**

To solve a problem, you must first understand it. The “Meta” view encourages a far-reaching analytic lens, incorporating the different experiences and motives of the many involved stakeholders.

**Connectivity**

By proactively galvanizing knowledge, motivations, and capabilities, Meta-Leaders forge invaluable unity of effort and initiative. This connectivity includes leading *DOWN in your organization to subordinates*; leading *UP* to bosses or reporting authorities; leading *ACROSS TO OTHER DEPARTMENTS* within one’s organization; and leading *BEYOND* to those outside the organization.

Register to learn more.
The Character of the Meta-leader

Building Personal Character

Meta-Leaders commit to life-long learning and development. Strengthening character exemplifies this responsibility. The Meta-Leadership principles at right guide the thinking and behaviors of the Meta-Leader in navigating complex systems and decisions.

Self-reflection is central to strengthening character. It guides development of situational awareness. It compels the respectful relations critical for building connectivity of effort.

These questions, along with reflection of your behaviors in light of the Meta-Leader Principles, provides a guide to uphold appropriate character to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Build and Support Character Development in your Community of Leaders

Your commitment to build your personal character extends to creating the environment that values character development for members of your team, your organization, and your community. Character requires commitment.

Character counts when "You’re It." It also counts when those around you face their “You're It” moment.

Meta-Leadership Practice Principles

For greater depth and to learn more on each of these practice principles attend one of our leadership training programs.

Character

Some of these include:
• Thinks and acts from a solid ethical and moral center
• Wields “good” power
• High Emotional Intelligence

Transactional

Some of these include:
• Uses influence beyond authority to drive actions
• Intentional in their actions with a bias for action
• Invests in mutually beneficial human relationships

Transformational

• Pivots to adapt to changing conditions
• Models and fosters resilience
• Creates an environment for Meta-Leading

Register to learn more.
Getting Out of The Trap of The Basement

Going to “the Basement” During a Crisis
Ensuring survival is a primary function of your brain. The brain is wired for self-preservation. When a threat is perceived, an almond-shaped neural structure ignites – the Amygdala – activating emotions and responses directed toward survival. The lower and more primitive neurons – often called the reptilian brain – overtake higher level thinking. The Freeze – Flight – Fight response activates. In Meta-Leadership terms, this is called GOING TO THE BASEMENT.

You go to the basement in response to a real threat – a car is barreling toward you. You jump and save your life. You similarly go the basement in response to less severe threats – an angry outburst from a partner during a crisis response operational meeting, a disappointment in a project outcome, or an emotional outburst from others. In primitive basement mode, your brain does not always distinguish the relative severity of threats. You are IN THE BASEMENT.

Getting Out of the Basement
Once there, your task is to GET UP & OUT OF THE BASEMENT. As Meta-Leader, you then lead others up and out of the basement. This is critical to normal functioning and in a crisis, to responding to the situational contingencies. When in the basement, your thinking and actions are sub-optimal. You aim to reestablish clarity and focus. Understanding cognitive function makes it possible to get “smarter than your brain” – mitigating natural impairments to complex reasoning and problem solving.

What are the three steps for getting out of the basement?
Our leadership training programs will teach you more.
The POP-DOC Loop

Meta-Leadership Rhythm to Support How You Lead in the Crisis

There is a cadence to Meta-Leadership. **POP (Perceive, Orient, Predict):** What is happening? **DOC (Decide, Operationalize, Communicate):** What should be done about it? The POP-DOC Loop is a tool for intentional, disciplined navigation of complexity. Your objective is to achieve situational understanding and deploy effective plans of action matched to the situation as it evolves.

The Continuous Mobius Loop

POP-DOC is depicted as a Mobius Loop, a continuous ribbon with a twist. The left side are thinking steps while the right side are action steps. They progress linearly as understanding precedes operations. However, “paralysis by analysis” is as dangerous as the “fire, ready, aim” of premature intervention. The crossover at the twist catalyzes the transition from analysis to activity as you lead and intercede in the situation.

The POP-DOC is not a one-time exercise. After completing the Loop, re-perceive to assess impact and adjust decisions and actions. When used continuously, POP-DOC is a robust feedback loop for continuous assessment and adaptation.

The six steps of POP-DOC represent distinct cognitive processes.

A tool for systematic assessment, decision-making, action, and communication. A guide for trial, learning, adaptation and shared success.

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