

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a blue button-down shirt with white polka dots, is smiling as she waters a green plant in a white pot. She is holding a white watering can. The background is a bright, modern office space with a window and other plants. A large, semi-transparent white number '1' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

HEALTHY LEADERSHIP

HOW TO THRIVE IN THE NEW WORLD OF WORK

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Something is healthy

when it is in an optimal state of wellbeing. We strive for healthy relationships, a healthy diet, a healthy body, a healthy mind, healthy emotions, healthy perspectives, healthy conversation, healthy awareness, and healthy finances. With all this focus on healthy everything, we asked, “What about healthy leadership?” There are far too many examples of destructive, unhealthy leadership. Yet in today’s world of work, if you want to be competitive, understanding and applying the principles and practices of healthy leadership is key.

Healthy leadership focuses on the health and growth of all parties: the leader, the team, and the business.

If the team thrives, so does the business and everyone it serves. In other words, healthy leadership drives healthy growth for all stakeholders. Cultivating healthy leadership is not automatic. It doesn’t just happen on its own. It is a choice. If you choose to apply the actionable strategies and tools we share in the pages ahead, you will predictably reap rewards that include:

- A purpose-driven organization and team members.
- A culture that is safe and innovative and makes team members want to stay.
- Intellectually and emotionally engaged teams.
- Team members working in their gifted areas who flourish.
- Excellent execution that drives healthy results.

Healthy leadership matters because unusually high-performing teams are the ultimate advantage for any organization—a business, a non-profit, a sports team, or a family for that matter. In today’s ultra-competitive marketplace, good results just aren’t good enough. Innovative or unique products or services might get you into the game, but only your team can create a “wall” that is too high and difficult for your competitors to climb. To win, you need to produce extraordinary results, which only come from extraordinary teams. And where there is an extraordinary team, you can bet there is a healthy leader. That’s why leadership—specifically, your leadership—matters.

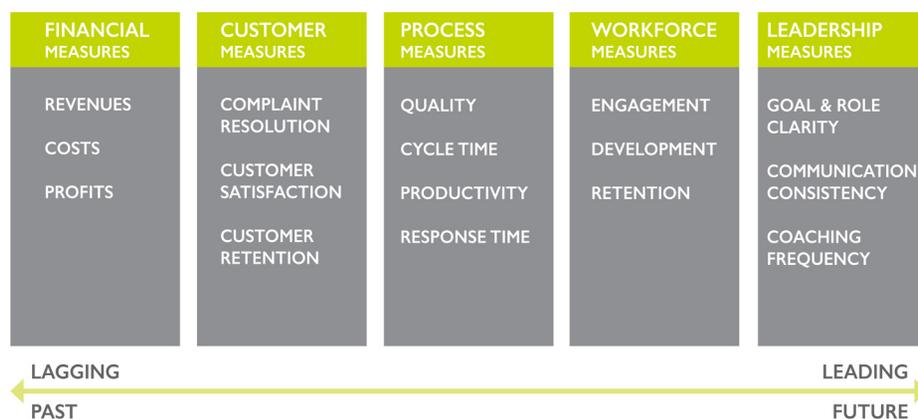
Research bears this out. In fact, according to one study, up to 70% of variance in an organization’s performance is attributable to leadership behavior.¹ Nothing has a bigger impact on organizational success than leadership—not culture, strategy, processes, or incentive systems.² The single most important factor influencing the growth of your company is how you lead.

Grow yourself, grow your people, grow your business.

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LEADERSHIP AS A LEADING INDICATOR

Consider a measurement continuum. At one end are lagging indicators. These are the results of your team's past performance. They enable you to see if your activities produced the desired outcomes. At the other end of the continuum are leading indicators. These are the drivers of your team's future performance. They provide early warning signs of problems that might appear on the horizon. This continuum illustrates how leadership acts as the most crucial leading indicator of sustained, healthy growth:



Economic and competitive pressures compel many leaders to focus on lagging indicators, typically financial ones. Of course, it's important to consider lagging indicators to know how well you have performed in the past. However, you must be careful not to neglect leading indicators, since you want to be able to predict how your organization will perform six, nine, or 12 months from now. A singular focus on lagging indicators gives you little opportunity for corrective action if your team drifts off course. Healthy leaders look at both lagging and leading indicators, which allows them to connect the past and the future and to paint a more complete picture of team health.



TODAY'S EMPLOYEE PRIORITIES

Healthy leadership is more vital today than ever because peoples' relationship to work has changed, and so has the nature of work itself. Expansive research by Gallup clearly shows that today's worker is more purpose-driven, development-oriented, and focused on strengths.³

PURPOSE OVER PAYCHECK. Your team members don't just work for a paycheck—they want meaning. They want to work for organizations with a compelling purpose. Compensation is important and must be fair, but it's rarely the sole driver of career choices. And ping pong tables, cappuccino machines, free snacks and such are not strong motivators either. The emphasis for today's team member has switched from paycheck to purpose, and so must your leadership approach.

DEVELOPMENT OVER SATISFACTION. Today's employees are not pursuing mere job satisfaction. They strive for development—both personal and professional, which are increasingly inseparable. They want self-growth, and a position in an enterprise that is itself growing—so that they can contribute to it and be part of its story. As a result, they don't want bosses. They want coaches. They want someone in their corner who values them as both a person and an employee—someone who helps them understand and cultivate their strengths.

STRENGTHS OVER WEAKNESSES. Today's team members don't want to focus on fixing their weaknesses; rather, they want your help in building their strengths. Weaknesses rarely, if ever, transform into strengths, while strengths can develop infinitely. Leaders should not ignore weaknesses but instead, put employees in positions to maximize strengths. This benefits both the individual and the organization.

This new healthy leadership model benefits leaders at every level, and everyone they work with. It matters in an up economy or a down economy, in a start-up or a mature business, a local company or a global enterprise. It matters when you are in the board room and when you are in the break room. Leadership matters... and healthy leadership inspires everyone to thrive.

“To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace.”

–Doug Conant, former CEO, Campbell Soup Company and Chairman, Avon Products

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

Healthy leadership addresses human needs—it’s personal. This new approach to leadership is comprised of three principles and three practices that are no longer just nice-to-do in today’s new world of work. Healthy leadership is like a cultural magnet that attracts people to your team and the cultural glue that makes them want to stay. If today’s workers don’t see healthy leadership, they will look for it elsewhere.

Healthy leadership is not about the leader, but it starts with the leader. It’s about the people you serve. As a leader, when you help others grow, you grow—and growing people fuel growing, healthy organizations. The healthy leader’s success is measured in what others achieve—the leader’s impact is multiplied through others.

When you help others grow, you grow.



The three healthy leadership principles and definitions are:

Love: Do what is in the best interest of others.

Positivity: Manage negative emotions and increase positive ones.

Growth: Seek new insights, knowledge, and skills.

The three healthy leadership practices and definitions are:

Clarify: Crystalize a desired future and motivation to get there.

Connect: Build ties between work and human needs.

Coach: Unlock the potential in others.

The three healthy leadership principles are like an operating system. In fact, let's call them *PrinciplesOS*. This operating system supports the "apps" of healthy leadership—the practices. Your ability to implement the principles of love, positivity, and growth will either enhance or inhibit the effectiveness of your apps—healthy leadership practices of clarify, connect, and coach. The alignment between principles and practices is key, particularly with today's worker who deeply values authenticity and integrity.

In our work with clients for over 23 years, we have witnessed firsthand how these principles and practices enable leaders to inspire growth for all parties in our new, rapidly evolving world of work. Principles and practices that distinguished great leaders yesterday are basic requirements today. Challenges around sustained remote work and employees desire to see the human behind the leader are forcing leaders to elevate their games to be more human, more connected, clearer, and more positive.

There is an art and science to healthy leadership. The art comes into play in how you choose to authentically adapt these tools to your unique style and your team's unique needs. The science comes into play by understanding universal human dynamics and insights about how our brains work, then applying proven tools to get the best from yourself and those you are leading.

Healthy leadership is a process, not an event. To get in good physical shape, you must exercise each day, but you don't exactly know when you'll see results. You must trust the process.

**Healthy leadership is a process, not an event.
... You must trust the process.**

HEALTHY LEADERSHIP AT-A-GLANCE

PRINCIPLES

Love: Do what is in the best interest of others.

- Put the team before me.
- Be human. See the human.
- Respect people and perspectives.

Positivity: Manage negative emotions and increase positive ones.

- Manage your mind.
- Talk yourself up.
- Encourage others.

Growth: Seek new insights, knowledge, and skills.

- Become an expert on you.
- Cultivate curiosity.
- Learn from adversity.

Take this 2-minute Healthy Leadership assessment, then receive a real-time feedback report to start your journey: theLgroup.com/healthy-leadership-check-up

PRACTICES

Clarify: Crystalize a desired future and motivation to get there.

- Clarify vision to inspire action.
- Clarify values to guide behaviors and decisions.
- Clarify expectations to execute with excellence.

Connect: Build ties between work and human needs.

- Connect to meaning to fulfill the need for purpose.
- Connect to team to fulfill the need for belonging.
- Connect to contributions to fulfill the need for appreciation.

Coach: Unlock the potential in others.

- Coach on strengths to achieve mastery.
- Coach with questions to facilitate engagement.
- Coach toward autonomy to inspire ownership.

TEAM CARE STARTS WITH SELF-CARE

Can you recite the flight attendant's safety speech? We bet you can. You know, the one that goes something like, "...In the event of a loss of cabin pressure, an oxygen mask will drop from above. If you are traveling with a child, place your mask on first..." We found this version of the safety speech written by a flight attendant who was trying to break the monotony and win the attention of the passengers...

"In the event of a loss of cabin pressure these baggy things will drop down over your head. You stick it over your nose and mouth like the flight attendant is doing now. The bag won't inflate, but there's oxygen there, promise. If you are sitting next to a small child, or someone who is acting like a small child, please do us all a favor and put on your mask first. If you are traveling with two or more children, please take a moment now to decide which one is your favorite. Help that one first, and then work your way down."

As a parent, it always seems counterintuitive to put your own mask on first. The lesson in this speech for a healthy leader is simple: Take care of yourself, so you can better serve others. This sounds simple, but it can also feel unnatural for leaders accustomed to putting others' needs before their own. Failing to prioritize your own health can damage your ability to lead others.

If you are ever feeling the need for "oxygen" or that there is something a bit off that you can't quite put your finger on, think H.A.L.T. It's a simple reminder to take care of yourself and avoid getting too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired.

Hungry. Being hungry compromises your peak performance and focus. Keep your body appropriately fueled to minimize stress and maximize productivity. The more nutritious food your body gets and the fewer “empty calories” you consume, the happier your body becomes; this results in a healthier metabolism and less intense hunger signals. Also, avoid multi-tasking during snacks and meals. Your brain and five senses are an important part of digestion and satisfaction. If you eat while watching television or answering email, you won’t really taste your food, which can lead your body to send out hunger signals even after you’ve eaten.

Angry. Remember that positive emotions expand possibilities you see, while negative emotions limit them. Unexpressed emotions do not go away, they just rear their heads in uglier ways. Carrying around anger will inevitably deteriorate relationships and your own body. The key is to vent your emotions in constructive ways: talk feelings out with a trusted friend, write in your journal, use a creative outlet, exercise, meditate, or pray.

Lonely. Humans are fundamentally social creatures...yes, even those of you who are introverts. Don’t misconstrue your social media friends for real interactions that make you feel connected, wanted, and cared for. Reach out to those at work, in your community, at your place of worship, from your alma mater-anyplace that feels comfortable for you. Choose to be present, to share words, laughter, and real-life connections.

Tired. If food is fuel for your body, then sleep is the pit crew providing needed maintenance. Sleep deprivation has been used as a form of wartime torture for good reason-it works. The average person requires seven hours of sleep per night to be at his/her best. Sleep replenishes. It serves as a cognitive car wash, restoring and refreshing your mind, body, and spirit. Take the long view and get the rest you need so you can sustain your productivity.

Take care of yourself, so you can better serve others.

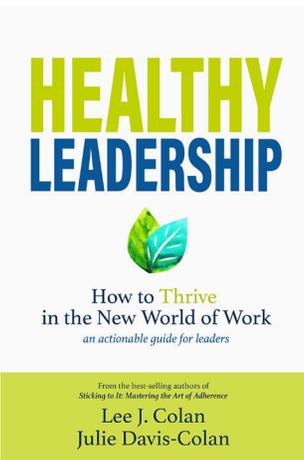
Healthy leaders are generally, well, healthy: they eat right, exercise, get regular check-ups, read a lot, engage in hobbies, and have friends outside of work. It's what fuels their focus, creativity, and drive while they are on the job. Staying in balance physically, socially, spiritually, and emotionally, and recognizing the four H.A.L.T. triggers will help you stay at your best. Additionally, taking care of yourself sets a healthy example for your employees.

If you care for yourself, then you'll be at your best to help your team be at its best... and thrive. 📖

*"As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands,
one for helping yourself, the other for helping others."
–Maya Angelou, American author, poet, and civil rights activist*



Info



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lee J. Colan, Ph.D. is an organizational psychologist and CEO advisor. He applies an in-depth understanding of business, science, people, and organizations to help leaders and organizations grow. As a result, he quickly helps leaders bring order where there is chaos, clarity where there is ambiguity, and growth where there is decline. He has written and co-authored 15 popular leadership books that have been translated into 10 languages, including the bestselling *Engaging the Hearts and Minds of All Your Employees* and *Sticking to It*.

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Endnotes

1. Thomas, A. (1988). Does leadership make a difference to organizational performance? *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 33(3), 388-400. Also, Cameron, K.S. (2012). *Positive Leadership: Strategies for extraordinary performance*. San Francisco, CA: Barrett-Koehler.
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