

Leading with Little Authority

Guidance for Emerging River Leaders



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Introduction

- **Warm-up activity – “where are we from?”:**
 - In the chat field in Zoom, please share what city are you currently based in, and what is your closest major river system that needs better stewardship.



Learning objectives

1. To better understand the **challenges** that emerging river leaders typically face when seeking to lead with little or no authority.
2. To explore, at a high level, **6 strategies** to be more influential in this context.
3. To prompt **reflection** and the identification of some specific **actions** we could take to grow as river leaders.
4. To provide opportunities for webinar participants to **share their experiences** and ask **questions**.
5. To encourage emerging river leaders to learn more (e.g. by participating in the IRF RiverAcademy's 'Leadership for River Practitioners' [online introductory course](#)).



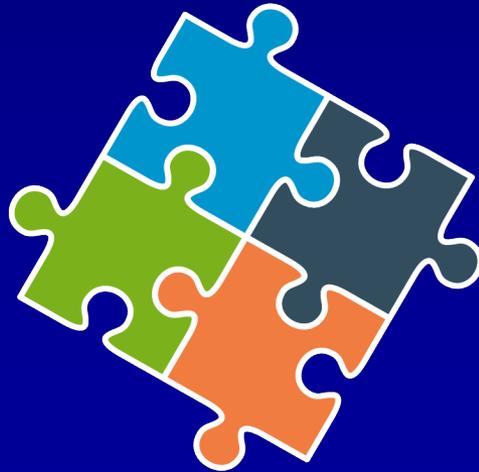
Why are we here?



Morning Mist, Rock Island Bend, Franklin River, Tasmania, Peter Dombrovskis.

Webinar structure

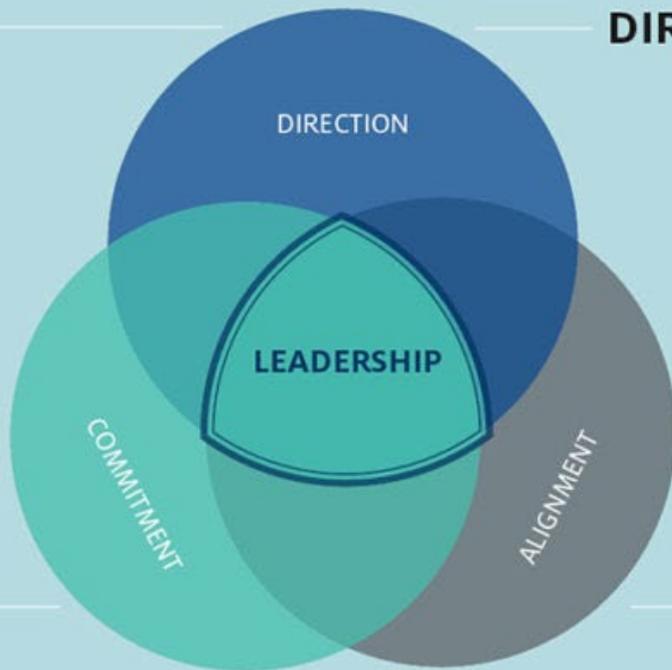
- Context / background.
- 6 strategies for leading with little authority.
- Reflection activity – what's an **action you could take** to apply one of these strategies in practice?
- Q&A.



What is 'leadership'?

HOW LEADERSHIP HAPPENS

DIRECTION, ALIGNMENT, COMMITMENT (DAC)



DIRECTION
Agreement in the group on overall goals.

ALIGNMENT
Coordinated work within the group.

COMMITMENT
Mutual responsibility for the group.

“The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority.”



Dr Ken Blanchard

The Challenge

The challenge as I see it...

The leadership performance of emerging river leaders is often constrained by some, or all, of the following:

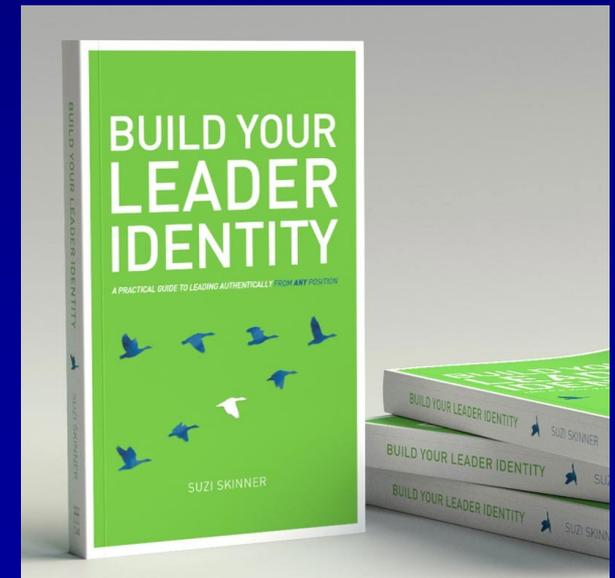
- A **mindset** that currently inhibits their ability to drive change.
- Not yet having done the work to build different bases of **power**.
- A limited understanding of the types of **leadership role** that are available.
- Not yet having built the necessary leadership **knowledge** and **skills**.
- Having relatively low levels of **confidence**.
- **Contextual** factors (e.g. gender based discrimination).



6 Strategies for Leading with Little Authority

1. Adopt the right mindset

- See 'leadership' as a process of influence, not a position.
- See leadership as a 'team sport' with different roles you can play.
- Recognise that leadership skills can be consciously developed.
- Be inspired by what leaders with little authority have achieved.
- Understand that leadership happens through relationships.
- Many aspects of leadership require a proactive, strategic investment of time (e.g. social networking, building credibility).
- Adopt a 'leader identity'. ...



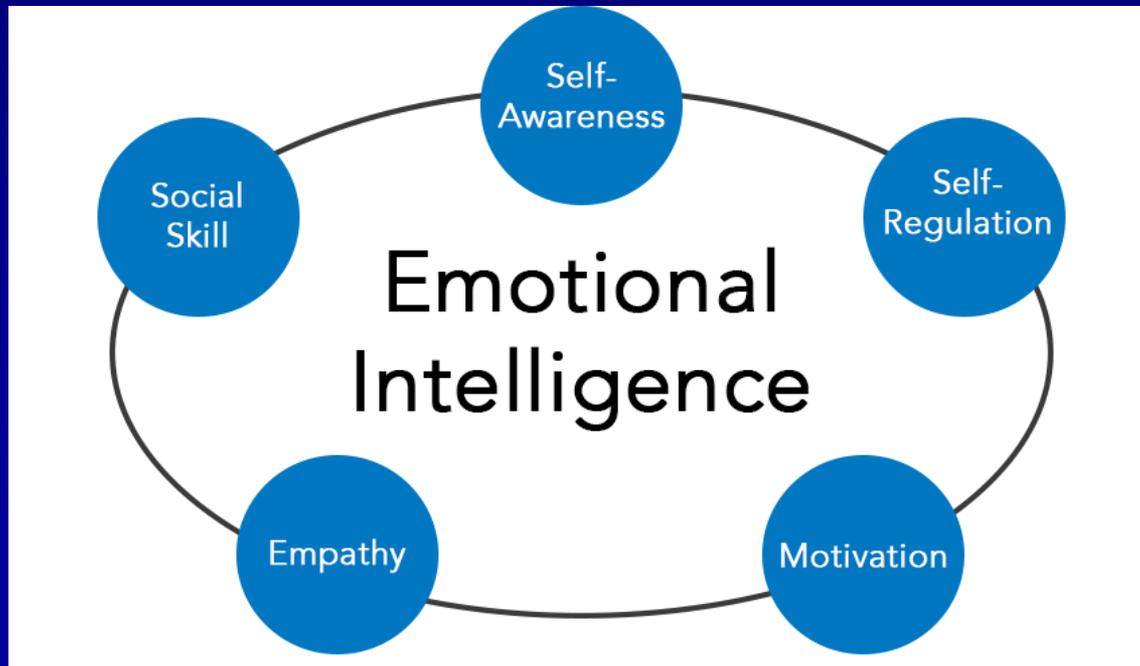
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”



Dr Margaret Mead

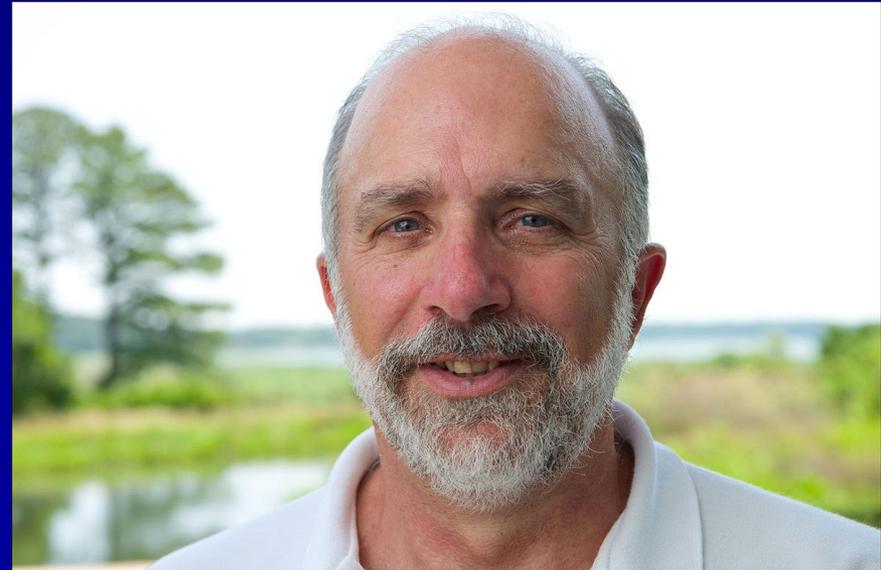
2. Strengthen key elements of self-leadership

- Clarify your purpose and values – know your ‘true north’.
- Build personal resilience (e.g. establish a personal support network and learn to reflect properly).
- Cultivate high levels of emotional intelligence (incl. self-awareness, self-motivation, self-regulation and empathy).

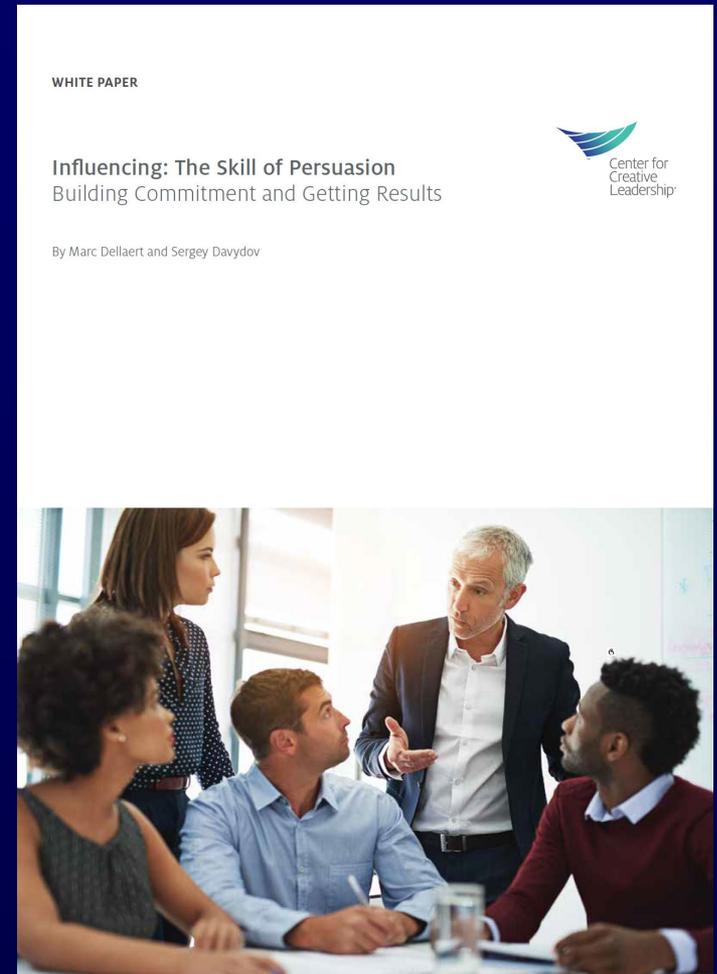


3. Build your power bases

- In order to exert influence, all leaders need some form of **power**.
- Personal versus position power.
- Ways to cultivate different forms of **personal power** include:
 - Building expertise (and letting people know you have it).
 - Cultivating relationships (especially trusting, mutually beneficial relationships).
 - Building credibility (e.g. as someone who is authentic, trustworthy and delivers).
 - Gaining access to information.
 - Building contextual knowledge.
 - Displaying charisma. ...



“Center for Creative Leadership research shows that the power of relationships, the power of information, and the power of expertise are most used by leaders.”



Dellaert & Davydov (2017), p. 8.

**“Charge your
power drill
before you
need to use it.”**



Poll: Building our power bases

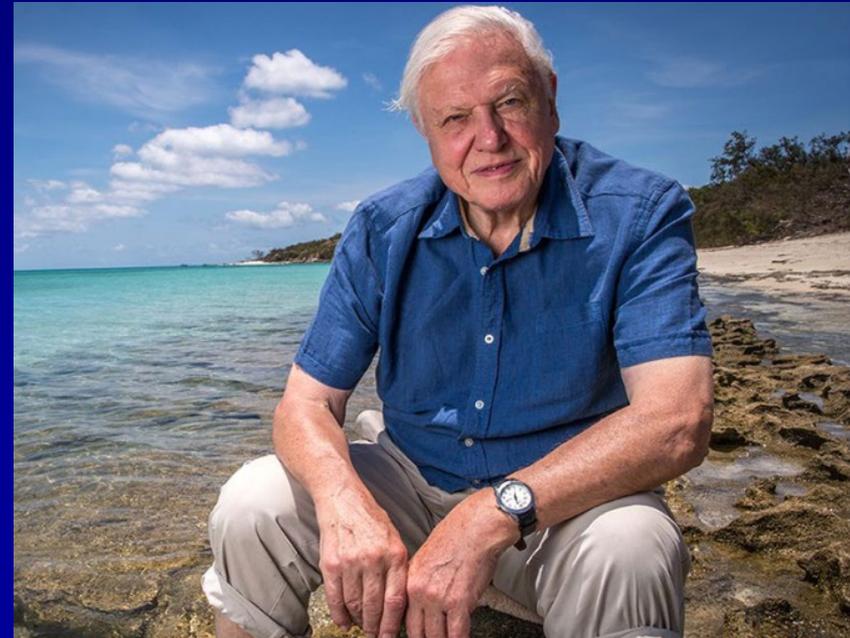
- **Qu 1:** To what extent do you already possess high levels of the following forms of personal power:
 - Building expertise (and letting people know you have it).
 - Cultivating relationships (especially trusting, mutually beneficial relationships).
 - Building credibility (e.g. as someone who is authentic, trustworthy and delivers).
 - Gaining access to information (e.g. valuable data, research findings).
 - Building contextual knowledge (e.g. institutional knowledge).
 - Displaying charisma.
- **Qu 2:** Which of these forms of power would you most like to build to improve your ability to exercise influence?



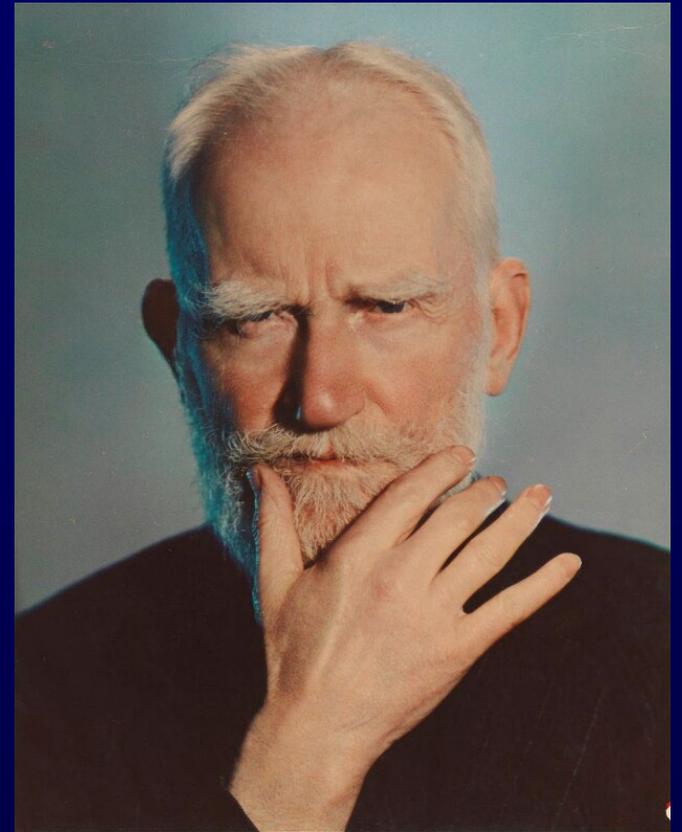
4. Build your communication & networking skills

■ Communication:

- Leaders exert influence via communication.
- Relevant communication skills to develop include:
 - Active listening.
 - Storytelling.
 - Delivering presentations.
 - Giving and receiving feedback.
- Don't underestimate the work and time needed to excel at these skills and build communication confidence.



“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place”.



George Bernard Shaw

4. Build your communication & networking skills

■ Networking:

- Start by developing the **mindset** of a 'constant gardener'.
- Be crystal clear on your various networking **objectives**.
- Build a **simple plan** on how to meet each objective.
- Build the **skills** needed to execute that plan (e.g. elevator pitch, social media).



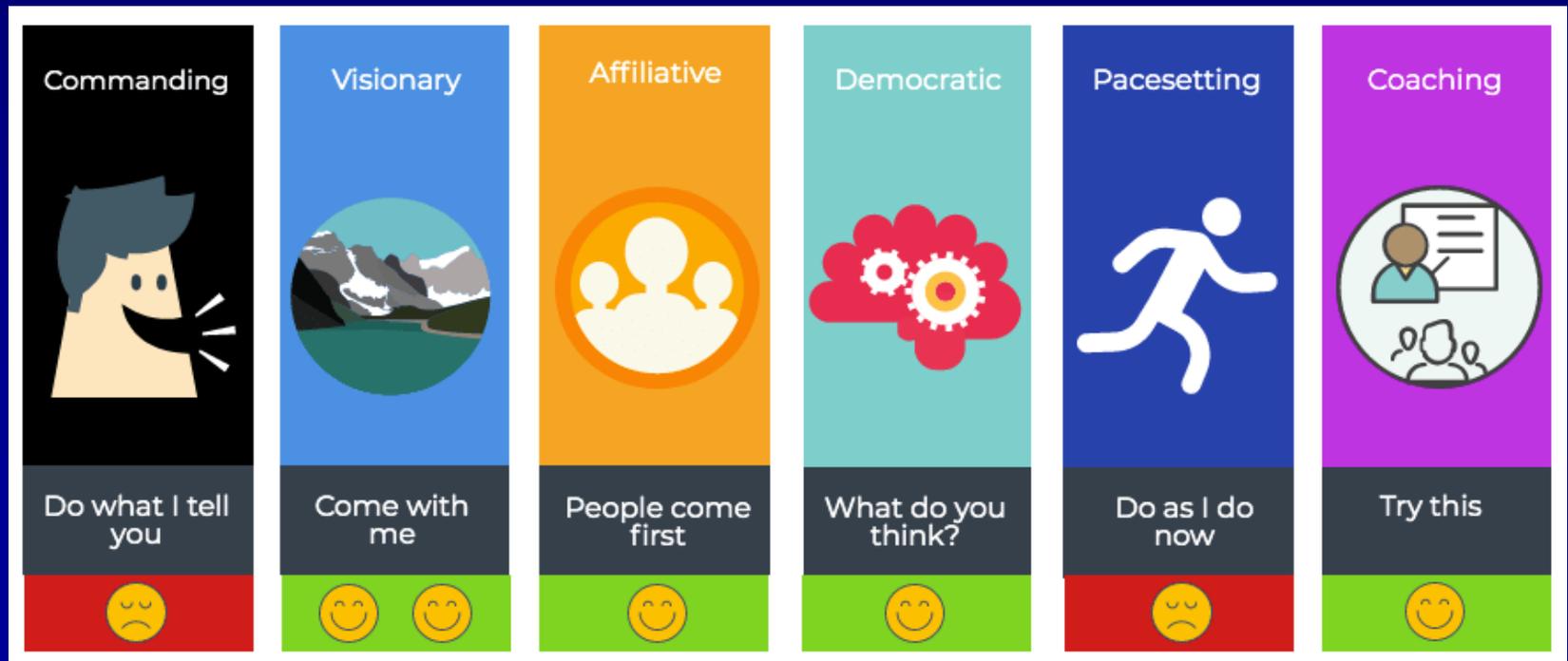
**“Dig your
well before
you’re
thirsty.”**



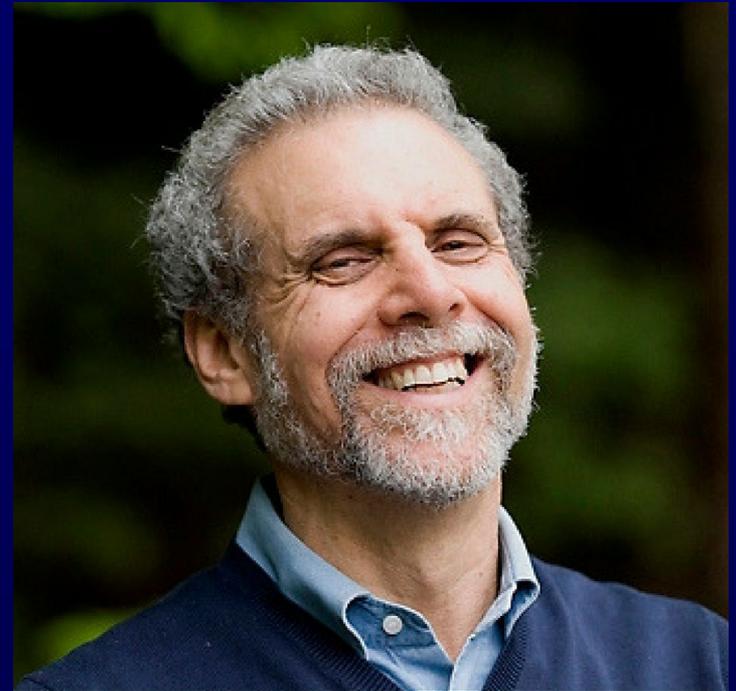
Chinese proverb

5. Learn to use different leadership styles

- 'Situational leadership' refers to the ability of leaders to authentically use different styles in different situations.
- The most effective leaders are able to use a wide variety of styles.
- A variety of frameworks exist (e.g. Daniel Goleman's six leadership styles).



“... the research indicates that leaders with the best results do not rely on only one leadership style; they use most of them in a given week – seamlessly and in different measure - depending on the business situation.”



Dr Daniel Goleman

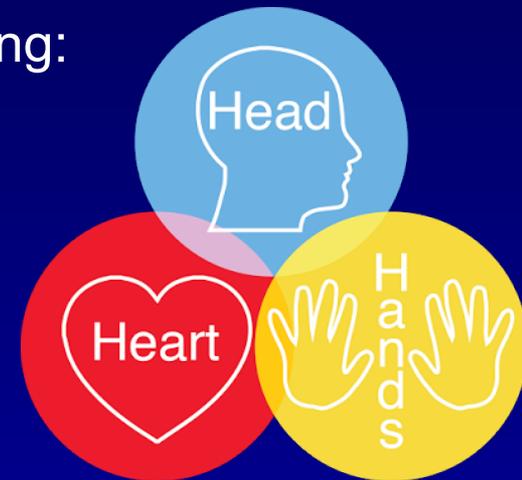
5. Learn to use different leadership styles

- The 'transformational leadership' style in particular is suited to leading without authority.
- This style produces engagement and extra effort from colleagues.
- It's more powerful if it is combined with authentic leadership.
- A good framework is Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner's [5 practices of exemplary leadership](#).



6. Learn how to design an influence strategy

- Effective leaders have a deep **understanding of their influence environment** and **carefully plan** significant influence attempts.
- There are many **design elements** to consider, including:
 - The best influence target(s).
 - The best 'strategic frame'.
 - The most appropriate combination of influence tactics.
 - Partners and coalitions.
 - Windows of opportunity.
- There are many frameworks that provide useful guidance (e.g. Gary Hamel's 7 steps, John Thwaite's 10 Commandments...).
- Learn through guidance, mentorship, experience and reflection.



Taking Action

What's next?

- The '70:20:10 rule' of leadership development places an emphasis on 'learning by doing'.
- In the chat field, please share:
 - **One specific action you could take** to strengthen your capacity to lead with little authority based on the tips we have explored today.



Close

Final thoughts

- Learning to lead without much authority is a **challenge** commonly faced by emerging river leaders.
- This challenge also represents a **terrific 'practice field'** to develop aspects of leadership that will be assets throughout one's career.
- The **6 strategies** provide some high level guidance on where to start.
- For more specific guidance, enrol in a quality **leadership development course and/or program**, and work with a **mentor and/or coach**.





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