

7 Best Practices for a Professional

- 1. Prepare character and competence to develop disciplined habits and instincts to do the right things well, even under stress, thus earning trust in self and from others.** Identify areas of improvement and change as priorities in plans and invest in learning and development to expand capacities. True leaders develop personal leadership and serve others first, then lead where they can to fulfill their callings and do the most good.
- 2. Earn empowerment rather than wait for it.** Admit that you are more responsible for your performance and growth than is your supervisor. Accept that your responsibilities, results, and rewards come from you, first, and partners second. Identify desired results, improvements, and actions in your professional plan. Anticipate what your supervisory leader needs to trust you have earned empowerment. Help your “manager” serve more like a mentor by presenting your plan with stated intent and seeking coaching, putting callings and stewardship before ego. Proactively seek to develop higher levels of trust in your competence and character for the seven levels of empowerment: (1) Tell, (2) Teach, (3) Direct, (4) Coach, (5) Support, (6) Delegate, (7) Empower.
- 3. Practice “no excuses” accountability.** Own it! Focus on solutions and results as well as efforts, taking responsibility for the mission and your part. Mitigating circumstances often affect an outcome, but one person is ultimately accountable.
- 4. Develop ethical fitness and decision-making from the start.** Loss of trust in character is harder to restore than well-intentioned mistakes or under-developed competencies. People are more willing to forgive failure through valiant effort than intentional violations of trust. Have personal and organizational training to reinforce how to make tough ethical decisions and choose *the harder right*. Stay aware that good “intent” does not always equal good “impact” and perception and truth do not always match.
- 5. Decide to think with positive expectancy and make the best of situations.** People face many disappointments and paradoxes in professional and other areas of life, especially when the stakes get high and stressful. Learn to make peace with them, persist, and “bounce high” when you fall.
- 6. Fulfill your calling and live a legacy to find meaning.** Money is like oxygen; you need it, but it does not give meaning to life. Design your life to be a masterpiece. Write and internalize your mission, vision, and legacy.
- 7. Be a champion for your calling, your profession, people you serve, and your organization.** Choose to develop a world-class “A” level attitude with commitment and courage toward seeking mastery in your competence. Work on your plan for life until getting to an “A” level of believing you have discerned your callings and written your choices. Identify and describe your desired legacy, then persist with commitment to fulfill it. Demonstrate character to keep promises and do the right things, even under stress. Develop confidence as you take action rather than waiting for confidence before you take action. Grow in your sense of connection to projects and the people working on them, matching on mission and values more than on personality. Develop from the inside-out genuine charisma based on character and competence that attracts people who want to work with you on common goals. Serve as a champion for people and organizations of good intent, helping them identify and fulfill their callings, gifts, and talents toward stewardship and with distinction.



[This is a summary of actions recommended from our book, *Professionalism Under Stress*, with sections on Professionalism, Stress, and Leadership.]