



HOW TO CREATE MORE QUALITY LEADERS

by Martin Lush

At NSF we work closely with leadership at every level, especially with Quality Directors. So, I asked the team: *"What's the difference between leaders who excel and those who just get by?"*

Four key characteristics of successful leaders stick out. Our call to action to you is to explore how you and your team can do MORE in each of these areas.

1: GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF THE BUSINESS, NOT JUST QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE

HOW SUCCESSFUL LEADERS THINK

- > They have a strong sense of "why," beyond their job description, that inspires themselves and others. This starts with giving everyone a why (THE PATIENT), not just "because GMP compliance says so."
- > The best QA leaders have usually experienced life outside QA, giving them a broad understanding of the business, the challenges, the pain points and the power of collaboration. They understand the full product lifecycle from R&D to manufacturing, operations, logistics and supply chain.
- > Their business knowledge allows them to think strategically, not just tactically.
- > They focus on future challenges like "What impact will regulation X have?", "How will I manage 30% reduction in my budget over the next three years?", "What impact will technology Y have in three years" and "What are my group's succession plans for the next three to five years?"
- > They are prevention focused and consider crisis management and firefighting to be a sign of poor leadership and lack of strategic thinking.



HOW THEY ACT

- > Create rich networks inside and outside their business, driven by the desire to help others
- > Speak the language of business, not just compliance; they are business and financially literate

Additional Resources

Ted Talk: Start With Why by Simon Sinek

Book: Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success by Adam Grant

2: JACK OF ALL TRADES – MASTER OF NONE

How successful leaders think

- > They don't expect to know the answer to every question or to solve every problem. If they thought they could, they know they would be deluding themselves.



- > Their broad understanding of the business allows them to see patterns before problems occur.
- > They are comfortable with uncertainty. As one great leader said, “Not knowing everything is OK, it’s the ability to ask the right question, to the right person in the right way that matters. Then to pause, genuinely listen and then question again, and again and...”

- Make sure their Deviation and CAPA, Change Control and Audit and Self Inspection systems focus on removing complexity, not adding it.
- Practice NSF’s Simplification Process!

HOW THEY ACT

- > Have five to six accurate and reliable key performance indicators (and surveillance systems) to allow assessment of controls, all leading, not lagging indicators.
- > Do less and then obsess. They practice the 80:20 principle, focussing 80% of their time on the 20% that matters – prevention, growth and improvement in things like:
 - People development
 - Simplification
 - Building and maintaining networks
- > Are passionate coaches and mentors who genuinely care for the development of the team.
- > Are resilient and future focused and:
 - Never accept the status quo
 - Thrive on failure (FAIL = first attempt in learning)
 - View complacency as the biggest threat to their company’s future.
 - Never take criticism personally
 - Consider organizational agility to be more important than productivity
 - Are obsessed by simplification and the KISS principle (Keep It Simple, Stupid). After all, agility and simplification go hand in hand. You can’t have one without the other.

Additional Resources on NSF’s Website

Webinar: The Tyranny of Key Performance Indicators

White Paper: Are You Facing a Complexity Crisis

Webinar: The Art and Science of Simplification – How to Win Your War on Complexity

White Paper: Changing Your Quality Culture and Improving GMP Behaviors: What Works and What Doesn’t

White Paper: How to Use B = M.A.t.H

Video: How to Jumpstart Your Pharma Business by Simplifying Processes

3: EXCELLENT RISK-BASED DECISION MAKING AND COMFORT WITH “LIFE IN THE GREY ZONE”

HOW SUCCESSFUL LEADERS THINK

- > They recognize there is no such things as 100% compliance or zero risk.
- > They avoid paralysis by analysis (over-thinking).



- > They acknowledge that risk aversion creates more risk by adding complexity and diluting accountability.
- > By taking the 80:20 approach, they avoid decision making fatigue.
- > When making decisions, they put logic (data), before emotion or gut feel (which is wrong 80% of the time).
- > They think collaboration and consultation before deciding. They know more brains come up with a better decision and more accurate risk assessments. They rarely make a decision in isolation.
- > They are comfortable with constructive disagreements to challenge their understanding. They openly explore areas of disagreement to find a third way, rather than defend their position.
- > They focus on understanding before deciding. They know that decisions, well-researched and understood, are easy.

HOW THEY ACT

- > Make calm, methodical, data driven and consistent decisions, typically following the same process or decision making rules with clear “redlines” that are never compromised.

These include:

- I will never compromise patient safety.
- I will never make a decision with a high level of uncertainty.
- I will never decide purely on gut feel.
- I will never succumb to group think.
- > Create space (time) between the event and the decision. The more important the decision, the bigger the space. They never make rash decisions.
- > Consult widely before making important decisions, 80% listening, 20% questioning. They seek first to understand, before being understood.

- > Avoid “yes” people, preferring to seek out those who will challenge them.
- > Always review their decisions afterwards. “Was it right or wrong?”, “What would I do differently next time?”

Additional Resources on NSF’s Website

Webinar: Judgement Calls – Making Decisions Under Pressure

4: PASSIONATE COACH, MENTOR, TEACHER, LIFELONG LEARNER AND DELEGATOR

HOW SUCCESSFUL LEADERS THINK

- > They believe they have an obligation to help and develop others and themselves, share knowledge and admit their mistakes. The job of any leader is to create leaders, so they walk the talk and model the way.
- > They recruit based on character and talent, not knowledge or qualifications. When you get people with the right character and talent – you can teach the rest.
- > They recruit “rebels” – people who think differently and have the courage to say there is a better way, and create an environment where this is possible.
- > When faced with a challenge, they consider whether it is a development opportunity, for themselves and their team.

HOW THEY ACT

- > Pursue education outside the classroom using the 10/20/70 method.
- > Delegate, coach and mentor relentlessly.
- > Create a rich learning environment where problems, unplanned events and crisis never go to waste. Every problem is seen as a learning opportunity. They openly share their failures (and learning) throughout the organization.



Additional Resources on NSF's Website

Webinar: Training – Making it Stick

Also see my post on LinkedIn: The Surprising Truth About Making Mistakes

WHAT NEXT?

- > Discuss these characteristics with your colleagues – how do you and others compare? Do you think and act the same? What do you need to do **MORE** of?
- > Take advantage of the additional resources.
- > Please let me know what you think (martinlush@nsf.org) – I'm sure you can add to the list based on your own experiences.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Martin Lush has over 30 years' experience in the pharmaceutical and healthcare industry. He has held senior management positions in QA, manufacturing, QC and supply chain auditing and has conducted audits and education programs for many hundreds of companies in over 25 countries.

WANT TO ACCELERATE YOUR LEADERSHIP AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Contact Martin Lush for a free and confidential chat, 1:1 coaching and mentorship. He has over 42 years' experience and has held leadership positions from the shop floor to director level. He currently helps leaders at every level maximize their potential.

For more information, contact healthsciences@nsf.org or visit www.nsfhealthsciences.org

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NSF INTERNATIONAL | HEALTH SCIENCES

The Georgian House, 22/24 West End, Kirkbymoorside, York, UK YO62 6AF | **T** +44 (0) 1751 432 999
789 N Dixboro Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48105, USA | **T** +1 202 822 1850

E healthsciences@nsf.org | www.nsf.org | www.nsfpharma.org | Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) & [Twitter](#)