Five-Minute Leadership Hacks

Leadership for Busy Leaders.
Five minutes at a time

LEAD
ABOVE NOISE
LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE, SIMPLIFIED

WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?

"Business" is not a term that was coined accidentally. Business is busy. And as we become increasingly engaged in all of the "busyness" — or the noise around us — we lose sight of what truly drives our business forward.

So how do we break through the noise and harness our leadership chops to catalyze our teams to deliver results that really move us forward?

The answer? We do it five minutes at a time.

Read on for 9 leadership hacks that can be delivered in only five minutes...

ONCE UPON A TIME

Tell them stories.

OK, maybe not about princesses and castles. But let your team get to know the "you" of way back when.

Yes – your team looks to you for guidance and direction, for feedback and decision-making. But they also need to see that you didn't start out where you are today; that you've been where they are. That you tried things, you failed, you learned, you felt defeated, and yet you've pushed through it all.

Share the lessons you've learned. Not through lecture, but through real, human stories. Let them peek at your past failures and see that you've squeezed the learnings out as if from lemons.

By doing this, you make yourself accessible, and you encourage testing, learning and failing. All of which catalyze innovation and growth.
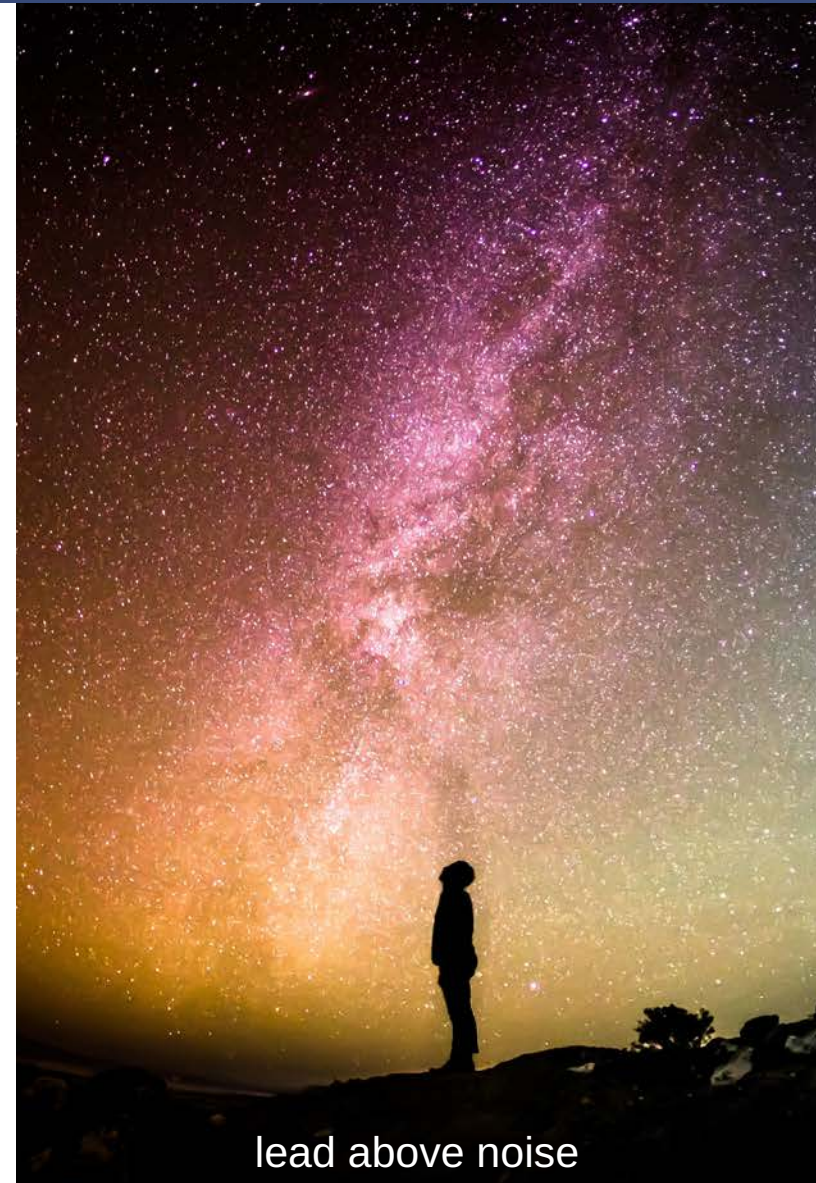
lead above noise

HIT ME WITH YOUR BEST SHOT

Invite ideas.

Invite your team members to share with you the scariest, craziest ideas they've NEVER had the "cajones" to share.

Burritos by drones? Terrible idea! BUT... if you can get them over the fear-hump, and show them you're interested in their inklings and they won't be struck down for sharing even the stinkers, you'll open their creative spigots.

Great ideas come from all points on an org chart. And in this world that is nearly entirely mobile, digital, and be-twittered, it's likely that your next best idea will come from a millennial who's too afraid to share what's on his mind.

And the best part? Likely he'll share it in under 140 characters! You never know where your best ideas are coming from. But generally it's a volume game. So get those floodgates open!
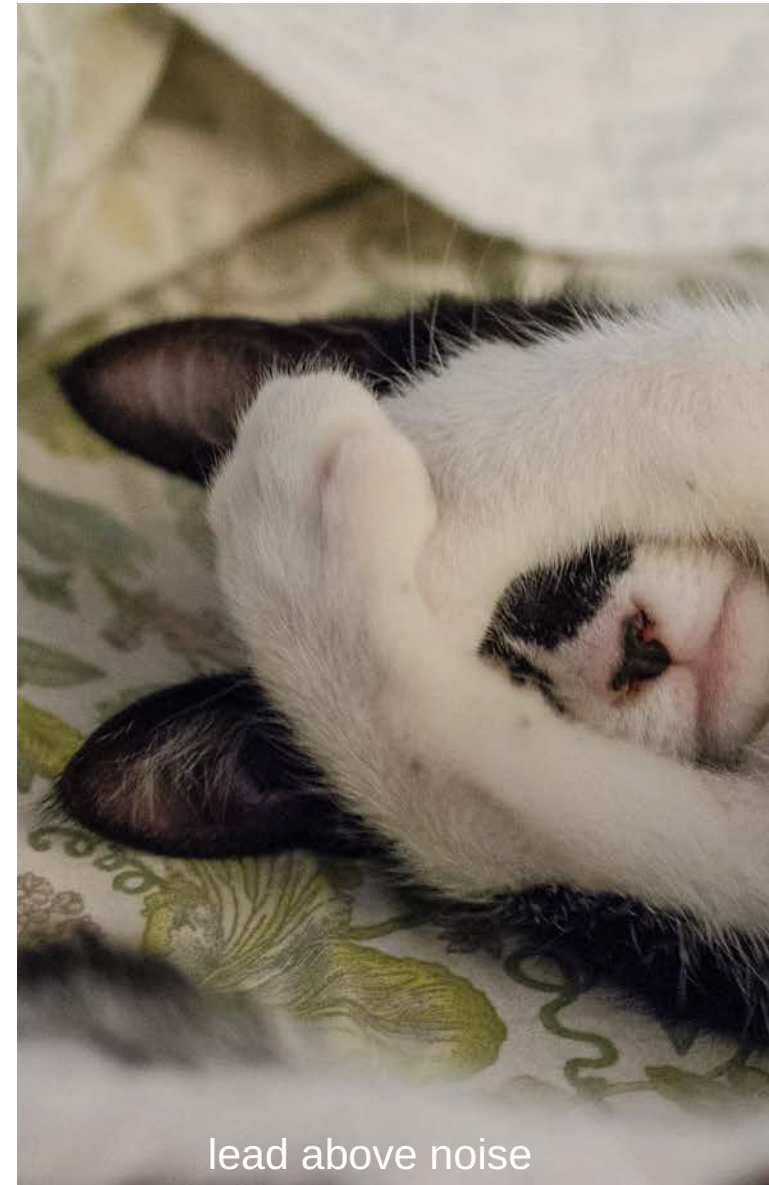
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IT'S NOT YOU, IT'S ME

Ask where you're distracting.

Often with noble intent, we – the leaders – present the greatest challenges to our team's effectiveness. Truly, we mean well – right?

But we're creatures of habit, and sometimes our habits wreak havoc. Are they spending hours formatting a dashboard to our liking? Are we sending 3am emails that in turn mess their mornings?

Are you doing anything that's inadvertently throwing your team's ability to be focused and prioritized? Maybe not. Chances are, they're not going to tell you until you ask. Obstructions to focus and efficiency will be present. And it's critical to have awareness of the spots where you're creating the problem...but have the opportunity to present the solution!

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I'VE GOT THIS ROLL OF DUCT TAPE

Find the holes. And plug them.

Your most important job as a leader is to enable your team to deliver THEIR best work. There is no shortage of strategies you can use to drive performance. But let's focus on the simplest strategy.

Understand how they're spending their time, spot the inefficiencies, and help them plug the holes. Are they chasing down 12 decision makers, when really only 2 opinions matter? Are they manually pulling together data because an internal system has broken down and they've not wanted to trouble you with it?

Our teams want to be seen as independent. They're scrappy and they'll get it done without involving you in the details. But sometimes as a leader, those details are precisely what we need. Find out where they are band-aiding a broken system so you can help get it fixed. Help them find the wasted spaces in their days so they can reallocate these moments to delivering more impact.
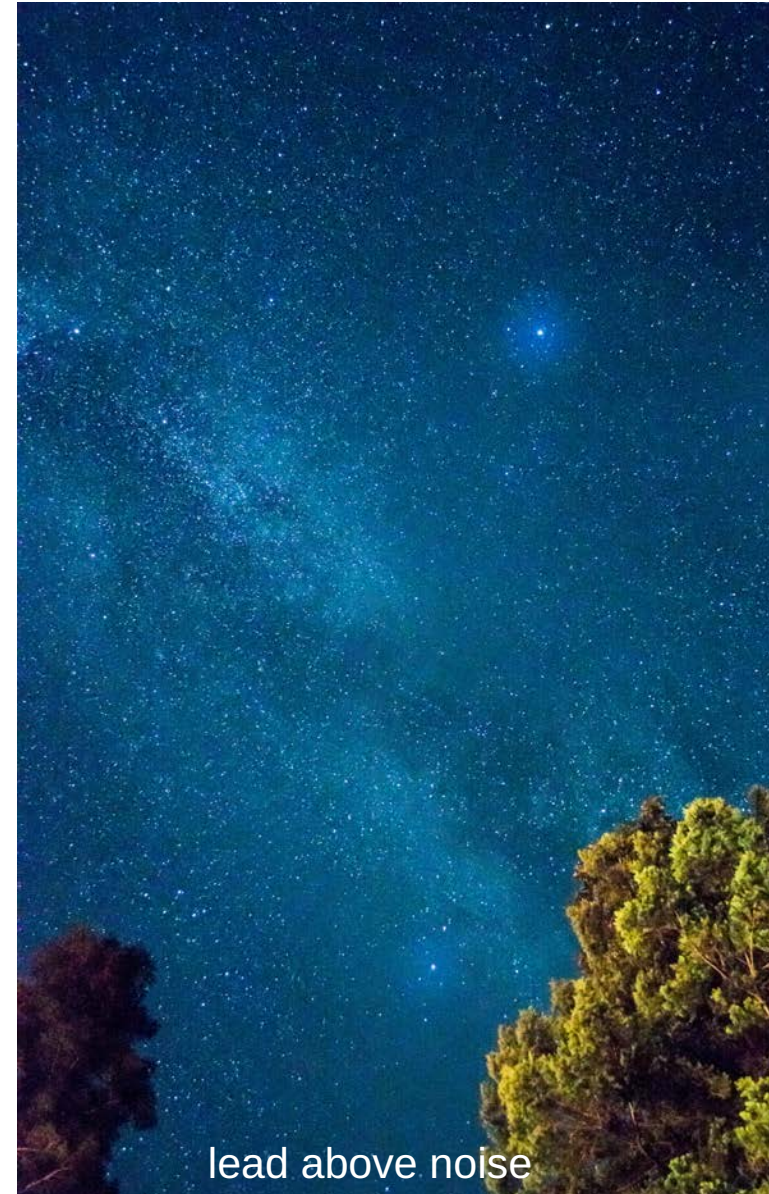
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HELP THEM FIND THEIR NORTH

Find their purpose and help them live it.

We know by now that a sense of purpose drives engagement. And engagement, in turn, electrifies the team to bring their best to the table every day. A sense of commitment to the cause drives passion and great work.

But the key to this magic is knowing each individuals' drivers. Share your own inspiration, your own sense of drive, just to offer a template. But recognize everyone's drive is unique. Maybe you love selling, or you get a work-high off of being "the" subject matter expert" on anything. But what drives and inspires you is unique to you. So don't assume.

Maybe others get their spark from being a mentor or a coach, or from having a strong external brand and network. So learn this about your team – welcome their insight, and help them infuse inspiration into their days. For those who love educating – invite them to host a weekly "Lunch 'n Learn" with your team. For those who love the external – help them find speaking gigs that will put your company in a great light. It's a win-win when its done right!

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Hack #6

MAKE ME LAUGH...AT YOU

Invite the honest questions and concerns.

We've all had the experience of having a "dumb" question we're terrified to ask. You know – 'cause we really hate to look dumb.

But frankly, we expend so much energy hiding our knowledge gap, we're losing the chance to just do great work. So dare them. Dare them to ask you the most fundamental question they can think of. And then your job is to be patient. But also appropriately critical.

If you feel, over time, like they're not retaining your answers, and the quality of their questions isn't improving... then you may have a performance issue on your hands. But until then – put on your "cool" hat and let those questions roll!

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YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHAT I READ

Role model curiosity.

Whether funny, geeky, insightful, or just plain holy-cow-worthy... letting your team know THAT you're reading and WHAT you're reading may elicit the same on their end.

Reading both inspires and is inspired by curiosity. Curiosity spurs learning and thinking in new ways. It doesn't have to be great literature. It can be Twitter. It can be the comics. It can be fan fiction - even the vampire stuff! But reading is a habit that inspires ideas.

And getting your team to read, and then bringing them together for discussions of great or interesting ideas can be an invaluable practice. You never know what pearls you might uncover!

SO I'VE GOT THIS PROBLEM...

Pose questions and crowdsource ideas.

It can be scary to be vulnerable with our teams. It's tempting to want to nail a halo over our heads, and stay that way – kind of like Fabio and the fan that perma-blows his hair.

But the truth is, we all have things that challenge us. And the greatest leaders understand this: your job is not to be all-knowing. It's to build outstanding teams full of complementary skills that lend themselves to constructive debate and diversity of thought.

So if you've done that, if you've hired the best for their skills and ideas, then take advantage! Let go of the need to be the authority on all things. Share your own challenges. Invite them to participate in solving them with you. Two (or more) heads are better than one.

You'll get better solutions, stronger engagement, and you'll build the muscles required for real collaboration.

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THANK YOU. NO - SAY IT TO THEM.

Show gratitude. Authentically.

If this one's a mystery for you, then we need to bust out the Leadership First Aid kit and stop the bleeding!

Truly, I know that you know how important this is. So this one's not a flash of brilliance, but rather a critical reminder. This is one of the simplest tools in our toolbox as leaders, and yet we so often overlook its value.

Always, always be authentic. Don't start tossing out thank you's like Elvis with his Caddy's. Be thoughtful about the when and the where... but also don't be stingy. Use it broadly. Not just upon successful project completion, but along the way.

Thank people who've asked a bold question, or brought forth an insight. Thank them for taking a risk, even if it failed. Thank them for challenging you, and bringing constructive debate to the table. Take responsibility for making sure everyone feels valued for the contributions they've delivered – for all of the ingredients in the big beautiful sausage we call business!

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thank you

WANT MORE?

At lead above noise our mission is simple. we work with mid-sized businesses to catalyze outstanding performance that in turn delivers customer delight!

If you liked what you saw here, we can customize an interactive workshop to meet your needs. Contact us today for a free consultation:

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