

# 10 ways to become an excellent leader in news

by Alexandra Borchardt

While there is plenty of bad leadership around in all industries, it is safe to say that leadership skills in the media profession are particularly underdeveloped. Truly great leaders are rare, but decent leadership and management is a craft that can be learned and taught. The following is not a manual, but a compilation of advice gathered from the Reuters Institute's leadership programmes, through research, and decades of personal experience in the industry and beyond.

## 1. Listen more than you talk

Listen to your team, to your customers, to visionaries in the outside world. You will only find out what's about to go wrong, what needs doing, who needs your support, and major changes in your industry once you shut up.



## 2. Communication is key

Communicate with your audiences, communicate your message, communicate with your employees as well as with different parts of your organisation. A lack of communication is the major source of dissatisfaction and distrust within organisations and beyond. So tell the outside world how you work, tell your team what is expected of them, and please do care. And remember: the most important part of communication is listening.

## 3. Look beyond your industry



You should get suspicious if you find yourself surrounded by the same people all the time. It can be incredibly helpful to learn how other industries have tackled challenges that affect many alike: attracting young customers, finding talent, managing digital transformation, handling internal communications and putting a price-tag on services.

## 4. Journalism comes first

The mission of media organisations in a democracy is providing a public good. This should guide your investment decisions, your product choices, your hunt for talent. Value your non-journalists, but make sure they understand journalism and what the organisation is in for.

## 5. Get to know your audience

Let's face it: Quite a few projects in journalism are pursued to impress other journalists, particularly the competition. But they are actually not appreciated that much in the outside world. Use metrics to meet your audience, get them registered to see what they value, read relevant research about audience behaviour. And meet your audience in the real world – you might be surprised.



## 6. Scrutinise your incentive structure



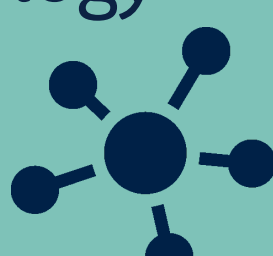
Who do you value, who do you single out, who do you celebrate, who do you promote? Because people want to be valued, they care about being acknowledged and they get frustrated when they are not seen. And it is not just about money.

## 7. It is (almost) all about talent

Hire the right people, and your organisation will flourish – easier said than done. It's tempting to rely on the usual suspects, the well-known 'brilliant' people of your industry. But make sure they're a right fit for the team. Develop talent within the organisation. It sends a particular message if the interesting jobs only go to external candidates. Aim for diversity of age, social background and views and support them to settle in.

## 8. Understand technology

Use technology as tools to achieve your goals. For example, AI can help you understand your audiences better, support you in hiring decisions, augment your products or be at the heart of new products. But it can't make the kind of choices you need to produce great journalism.



## 9. You will always be a role model, good or bad

It doesn't matter what you preach, most important is what you do. Your team will watch you closely and adjust - this will become the culture of your workplace. If you talk team play but always put yourself in the limelight, they will notice.

## 10. Make yourself redundant



One of your major goals should be to develop people so one day someone will be ready to take your job. That makes it easier for you to move on. Be proud when one of your rising stars is hired by the competition. Power is attached to your role, not to yourself. You don't own it. You just borrowed it for a time.

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Alexandra Borchardt is Director of Leadership Programmes, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, and former Managing Editor, Süddeutsche Zeitung. Read the full article on our website: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/risj-review/how-be-excellent-leader-news>

