

by [Mike Hawkins](#)



What would you say is the primary goal of a parent? If you're a parent, you know it's tough to narrow this down to one goal. After all, it is the most important role anyone could have. But wouldn't it fundamentally be to set your child up for success in their life (based on whatever success means to you and your family)?

How about for leaders, what is their primary goal? Isn't it the same, to set employees up for success in their job based on whatever success looks like for the organization? This probably sounds easy to agree with,

but here's where you might disagree. You might think a leader's job is to focus on results. Or that taking care of customers should be the first priority.

This is the age-old debate for leaders – should leaders focus first on their employees, customers, stakeholders, or organization's results? There will be different circumstances that require different priorities, but on a default basis, what should be a leader's top priority?

If employees are successful in achieving their goals and their goals include taking care of customers as well as the organization's results, isn't everything then achieved by focusing on the employees? Isn't the fundamental method to making an organization successful helping the people within it be successful? Similarly, for families, isn't the overall success of a family based on the success of the individuals in the family?

Great leaders don't focus on results. They focus on that which produces results. If organizations, families, or virtually any group of people want to achieve success as a whole, the best way is to help those within the group achieve their individual success. Again, this of course assumes that people have meaningful goals in place that directly contribute to the group's goals.

Let's assume you are a leader of a group. It could be a family, athletic team, work team, volunteer group, neighborhood, church, or friend group. You and your group have established the definition of success for the group. This might be a little formal for a family, but success can be based on anything, tangible or intangible. The definition of success can be an over-arching vision or loosely defined philosophies as well as specific values and defined goals.

With overall group success defined, then what do great leaders do? You might do this less formally for a family, but where possible, you would break down the group's goals into individual goals. Whether players, employees, or others, you would establish the definition of success for each person in the group. Then, as the individuals achieve success, the entire group achieves success.

With group success as well as individual success defined, now what do great leaders do? They make it a top priority to help each person achieve their individual goals. Group success depends on the leader helping the individuals in the group to be successful.

What group(s) of people do you lead? For whatever group it is, is success clearly defined for the group as well as the individuals? Is individual success defined in terms that contribute to the success of the group? If so, good job. Now, all you have left to do is help people achieve their individual success!

Perhaps the most challenging question to consider – how much time do you spend helping your people be successful? When you strip away everything else that you spend your time on, how much is left to working directly with the people you lead in helping them achieve their success?

Before answering this question, the better question might be - what does helping people achieve their individual success look like? The general answer is that great leaders remove obstacles to people's success. They foster an environment that enables people to perform to their highest potential. They look for opportunities to help people learn and develop. They provide the resources, tools, facilities, and assistance people need.

The #1 Role of Parents and Leaders

More specifically, listed below are the areas that help people achieve success. Most apply to people in any group including families. Note that “telling people what to do” isn’t listed. (If this doesn’t make sense, refer to https://alpinelink.com/docs/Lecturing_Doesnt_Work.pdf.)

Consider using this as a checklist to see how well you do and how much time you spend helping the people you lead be successful. Or better yet, give this list to the people you lead and let them grade you on how well you do in each area.

As a leader, how well do you help people:

1. **Define success** – Communicate the big picture vision, clear goals, and desired outcomes
2. **Gain self-awareness** – Provide feedback (reinforcing and correcting) regarding attitude, behaviors, effort, ability, and impact
3. **Embrace guiding principles** – Discuss core values, guiding philosophies, and relevant constraints
4. **Have the right mindset** – Foster a can-do confident attitude, passion, and a desire to achieve
5. **Possess grit** – Reinforce discipline, self-control, persistence, and endurance
6. **Maintain wellness** – Ensure wellbeing including psychological safety and manageable stress
7. **Receive information** – Communicate progress, changes, informational updates, priorities, and plans
8. **Learn** – Provide examples, demonstrations, training, education, and reference material
9. **Build skill** – Provide opportunities to gain experience, practice, and leverage innate talents
10. **Leverage methods** – Utilize proven processes, procedures, tactics, and techniques
11. **Align with others** – Ensure expectations, roles, responsibilities, plans, and priorities are agreed upon with whomever else is involved
12. **Receive assistance** – Get help from support staff, external resources (e.g. mentors, tutors, partners, suppliers, coaches, lawyers, consultants), and collaborative teammates
13. **Leverage resources** – Obtain use of needed equipment, tools, and transportation
14. **Utilize systems** – Possess the needed information technology, online access, and security
15. **Have facilities** – Obtain use of needed infrastructure, furnishings, and supplies
16. **Obtain funding** – Receive appropriate financing, headcount, and budget allocations
17. **Receive decision support** – Help with obstacle identification, problem solving, and planning
18. **Receive recognition** – Receive appropriate compensation, benefits, perks, and exposure for contributions
19. **Be accountable** – Follow up and track progress on agreed upon actions and plans
20. **Enforce consequences** – Take action based on progress made or not made on agreed upon actions and plans

With people’s success properly defined and in direct support of the larger group’s success, your #1 role as a leader of people is to help them achieve their individual success. To do so, give attention to the areas listed above and experience success on every level including your own.

PDF version of this article: https://alpinelink.com/docs/The_1_Role_of_Parents_and_Leaders.pdf.

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