

How to Become a Values-Based Leader by Harry Kraemer

Values-based leadership is the solution for today's leaders, says Harry Kraemer, former CEO of Baxter International and professor of management and strategy at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. He recently spoke on leadership from his book *From Values to Action: The Four Principles of Values-Based Leadership* at the Northwestern Alumni Association's Leadership Symposium.

Kraemer highlights the values-based foundation with his four principles:

1. Self-Reflection: "Values-based leaders are people who take time to think, to ask questions," says Kraemer.

Questions values-based leaders should be asking themselves include: What are my values? What do I stand for? What matters? What examples do I want to set? What is my purpose?

"It is turning these value-based questions into action."

Kraemer points out that this is not self-absorption. "Without self-reflection, how is it possible for one to know himself or herself? And if I don't know myself, how can I lead myself? And if I cannot lead myself, how can I lead others?"

Kraemer suggests taking a 15-minute daily personal inventory, something he does each day. Ask yourself these questions:

- What did I say I was going to do today?
- What am I proud of?
- How did I treat people?
- How did I lead people?
- How did I follow people?
- If I could live today again, what would I do differently?

2. Balance: Kraemer says values-based leaders should have a balanced perspective in the hope of achieving a global perspective. They should understand all sides of the story, seeking to understand before being understood. This will translate best if you understand yourself (self-reflection) and then the members of your team.

The more you relate to each of them, the better leader you are going to be, he says. Genuine interest and respect for team members is essential.

3. True Self-Confidence: This is not arrogance, or a false ego boost, says Kraemer. Instead, it is a definitive turning point in one's self-growth.

"When, as a person, you have reached a point where you can confidently say, 'I don't know,' and 'I am wrong,' you have true self-confidence. Leadership is not about control; it is the ability to influence people," he says.

4. Genuine Humility: This stems from one's roots and origins. Kraemer poses the question, "How did you get where you are today?"

He says one of the most common responses he gets is: "Hard work and having a specific skill set."

While he agrees those are important factors, Kraemer divulges his personal formula. "For me, it is a combination of these four things: luck, timing, 'the team' and my spiritual 'somebody else involved in the play.'"

Kraemer says the foundation of genuine humility is through others, the people and relationships from early in life and career.

He also emphasizes that leadership does not require a specific title. "You can lead long before you have anyone reporting to you," he says. "Most people cannot relate to someone who thinks they are God-like. A values-based leader is not trying to be right; he or she is trying to do the right thing."

There is power in leadership roles to inspire others. "In leadership, you are blessed to have enormous impact on people."