

The CEO's 7 Laws of Leadership

Member
Support Guide

VISTAGE



The CEO's 7 Laws of Leadership

Putting the laws into action

For more than 60 years we've had the great fortune to coach more than 100,000 CEOs. Through that experience, we have identified 7 fundamental truths about what it takes to be a successful business leader. This workbook was created to ground that wisdom into habit and reinforce your Vistage experience.

No matter where you are in your leadership journey, lean into “the laws” along the way:

1. Reject shortcuts to growth.
2. Carve out space to work on the business.
3. Challenge your thinking with peer perspectives.
4. Stoke curiosity.
5. Apply discipline to decision-making.
6. Follow your guide.
7. Rise by helping others.

Making these laws part of your everyday practice will help you transition from a good decision-maker to a great one — and that means better results for your company and your team.

1. Reject shortcuts to growth

As a Vistage member, you pursue leadership excellence with the commitment of a world-class athlete. You embrace challenges, reject shortcuts and take full ownership of the outcomes. You are a lifelong learner who is committed to continual improvement. You know that one of the biggest obstacles to growth is getting caught up in your own insular thinking — and one of the best ways to break free is by considering fresh perspectives from peers you respect and trust.

“When you’re receiving input from peers, listen without defensive posturing or interruption. The real reflection comes when you ask yourself: ‘Where’s the truth in the feedback?’”

AmyK Hutchens
Vistage Speaker



Try This | *Conduct a 360-degree assessment*

A 360-degree assessment can provide invaluable insights into your strengths and weaknesses through the eyes of those impacted the most.

Speaker and author Greg Giesen explains how to use this tool most effectively:

Step 1: Make it personal.

Ask your colleagues and direct reports in-person or over the phone. Explain why you’re doing the assessment, reassure them that you’re looking for honest, candid feedback and explain what happens when the assessment is over.

Step 2: Say thank you.

When the responses are in, thank participants for taking the time to complete the assessment.

Step 3: Set measurable goals.

Work with your Chair to set 3-4 goals. Then, ask participants from the assessment to weigh in so they feel invested in your success.

Step 4: Schedule another assessment.

Conduct another assessment in 6-12 months and ask the same responders to participate. This will keep you accountable and motivated by your own improvements.

Step 5: Take it to your Chair.

Team up with your Chair during a one-to-one session to review the results. Use this time to identify your strengths and opportunities for growth.



*How will you put **Law #1** “Reject shortcuts to growth” into action this month?*

Write one action step you will commit to:

Who will you ask to hold you accountable?

2. Carve out space to work on the business

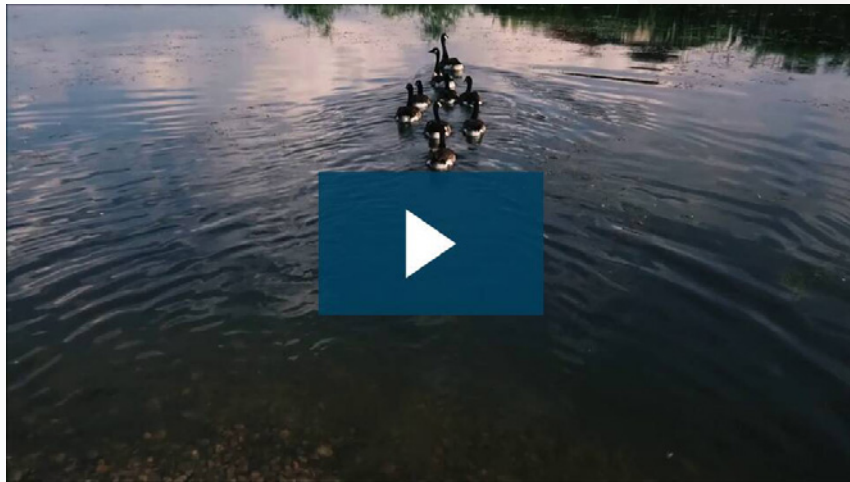
As a Vistage member, you routinely carve out time and space to reflect, acquire new knowledge and focus on strategy. And that's a big part of what your monthly group meetings and one-to-one sessions are all about.

This discipline allows you to gain clarity to navigate daily challenges while keeping your company on course for long-term success.

You may have to fight the instinct to always be in “go” mode, but you will likely appreciate the benefits that come from more thoughtful, strategic decisions.

Try This | **Make space for reflective thinking**

Reflective thinking is the one thing you cannot outsource. In this short video, Gair Maxwell, an expert on disruptive innovation, offers insight into the value of taking regular CEO “time outs.”



In addition to your monthly group meetings and one-to-one sessions, Maxwell suggests three ways to slow down and make space for reflection:

1. Get out of the workspace

Many leaders think more clearly when they are able to step away for a while. Go for a walk, get some exercise, try an online yoga class or guided meditation, sit out in the sunshine — whatever it takes to reset.

2. Pick up a book

Few practices can stimulate big-picture thinking more than reading a great book. Vistage Master Chair Tom Cuthbert offers his [top 7 books on leadership](#) development as a great place to start.

3. Learn something that sparks you

Whether it's painting, playing a musical instrument, or gourmet cooking, explore an interest that excites you. It will relieve stress and clear the way for more reflective thinking.



*How will you put **Law #2** “Carve out space to work on the business” into action this month?*

Write one action step you will commit to:

Who will you ask to hold you accountable?

3. Challenge your thinking with peer perspectives

As a Vistage member, you embrace diverse perspectives on important decisions from trusted peers. You combat insular thinking and confirmation bias by seeking input at your peer advisory group meetings. You lean into your peers, Chair and speakers for fresh perspectives, unhampered by institutional knowledge or personal agendas.

Try This | **How to root out confirmation bias**

Rather than seeking support that reinforces your beliefs, “Data Doc” Thomas Redman recommends considering the opposing view. He writes in Harvard Business Review:

1. Gather the data you would need to defend this opposite view.
2. Compare it to the data used to support your original decision.
3. Reevaluate your decision in light of the bigger data set.

Seek fresh perspectives 24/7

In addition to perspectives from your group, connect with thousands of Vistage peers across the globe for real-time advice. [Join a network](#) based on industry affiliation or special interest.





*How will you put **Law #3** “Challenge your thinking with peer perspectives” into action this month?*

Write one action step you will commit to:

Who will you ask to hold you accountable?

4. Stoke curiosity

Vistage members are high on curiosity and low on ego.

You are inquisitive, eager to explore and welcome new ideas from trusted sources. Vulnerability is viewed as an asset, and you are the first to admit that you don't have all the answers.

You ask questions to seek input and pressure-test your assumptions so you can land on the best decision for the business — not to prove your own point.

Try This | *A checklist for checking your ego*

Vistage Chair John Dame offers these tips to help you stay open, humble and curious.

- ☐ **Know what you don't know.**
Resist the impulse to be “master of the universe.” Rely on experts. Know when to defer and delegate.
- ☐ **Resist falling for your own publicity.**
We all do it: Whether we're writing a press release or a self-appraisal, we put the best spin on our success — and then conveniently forget that the reality wasn't as flawless.
- ☐ **Embrace and promote a spirit of service.**
Employees quickly figure out which leaders are dedicated to helping them succeed, and which are scrambling for personal success at their expense. Customers do, too.
- ☐ **Listen to the weird ideas.**
Open your ears to what others are saying. The most imaginative and valuable ideas tend to come from left field.

Learn from the best

Bookmark the [Vistage Webinars](#) page, an exclusive membership benefit. From best practices to intriguing case studies, sign up for live sessions with thought leaders or access a library of engaging webinars on demand.



*How will you put **Law #4** “Stoke curiosity” into action this month?*

Write one action step you will commit to:

Who will you ask to hold you accountable?

5. Apply discipline to decision-making

As a Vistage member, you follow a disciplined approach to decision-making.

You use a systematic process that takes into account your instincts; judgment based on experience and data; and perspectives from peers, mentors and employees.

Applying this rigor helps you make better decisions in less time ... consistently.

“Develop an approach to decision-making that feels authentic. There’s no one ‘right’ method. What counts is that you rigorously apply a conscious process that leads to better decisions — and better results for your business.”

Sam Reese
CEO, Vistage Worldwide, Inc.

Add
scenario planning
to your
decision-making
tool box

Try This | **Prioritize your decisions**

Prioritizing decisions is step one. President Dwight D. Eisenhower used a matrix method to determine priorities, taking into account urgency and importance.

Print this chart and keep it in eyeshot as a reminder of how to organize your time.





*How will you put **Law #5** “Apply discipline to decision-making” into action this month?*

Write one action step you will commit to:

Who will you ask to hold you accountable?

6. Follow your guide

As a Vistage member, you view your Chair as your guide and a critical component to developing leadership excellence. You value having a trusted sounding board and an experienced leader who holds you accountable.

You also welcome a holistic approach to mentorship, since you realize that personal matters affect your work performance as much as your work performance affects your personal life.

Leaders who rely on a comprehensive approach to development that includes feedback from trusted peers, effective mentoring, and insights from subject-matter experts continually outperform their competitors.

Try This | *Your Top 3*

Write down the top three development items and the goals you want to achieve for the upcoming year. Then, share them with your Chair.

Your Chair will help you break down your goals into tasks, think through the resources you may need along the way, and hold you accountable.

Accelerate your growth

A few years into your membership, your Chair may guide you to the [Vistage Executive Leadership Program](#) in partnership with Stanford Graduate School of Business. It's designed for CEOs who want to dive deep into their organization's strategy, structure and story.



*How will you put **Law #6** “Follow your guide” into action this month?*

Write one action step you will commit to:

Who will you ask to hold you accountable?

7. Rise by helping others

As a Vistage member, you aren't just focused on your own decisions. You also help others critically think through their challenges. In the process, you fine-tune your skills and hone your leadership.

By helping others make better decisions, you also create a positive impact on other companies and their communities. As a result, you are sure to leave a legacy that's far-reaching and long-lasting.

Try This | **Bring Vistage issue processing into your everyday life**

Just like in a peer group, you can help anyone in your life make sure they're spending time solving the right problem, rather than a symptom of a deeper issue. Be sure to ask:

- background information
- what they're trying to accomplish
- why it matters
- what solutions they've tried
- where they want help

Remember, make no observations or suggestions. Questioning will help them clarify their thinking.

How are you developing your leaders?

If you don't have a formal program in place — or one that really delivers — explore Vistage's purpose-built programs for each level of management. This way, your whole company rises together.

Member case study:
[Dome Construction](#)



*How will you put **Law #7** “Rise by helping others” into action this month?*

Write one action step you will commit to:

Who will you ask to hold you accountable?

Put the laws to work for you

The CEO's 7 Laws of Leadership aren't based on opinion. They're based on coaching more than 100,000 CEOs and business owners for over 60 years and helping them outperform the competition.

As a result, member companies grow 2.2X faster than the average U.S. small or midsize business. As a member, you have a proven platform to guide you, world-class resources to lean into and a powerful community that has your back.

All of us at Vistage wish you the greatest success on your leadership journey. Please know we are here to help every step of the way.



Vistage is the world's largest and most comprehensive approach to executive coaching for small and midsize businesses. For more than 60 years, we've been helping CEOs, business owners and key executives solve their greatest challenges through confidential peer advisory groups and one-to-one executive coaching sessions with accomplished business leaders. Today, more than 23,000 members in 20 countries rely on Vistage to help make better decisions for their companies, families and communities. The results prove it: Vistage member companies grow 2.2 times faster than average small and midsize U.S. businesses, according to a 2017 study of Dun & Bradstreet data. Learn more at [vistage.com](https://www.vistage.com).

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