

DR. LOIS FRANKEL

Get and keep the job you want.

Our March coaching tip comes from Dr. Bruce Heller, a long-term and valuable member of the Corporate Coaching International team. It is in response to the question he is often asked, “How do leaders learn to lead?” Bruce believes that continual learning is critical for *anyone* who is truly committed to becoming the best. Research and learning theory suggest there are three ways leaders learn to be leaders and the best way to remember them is using the mnemonic “TOE.”

- “**T**” stands for trial and error. To learn something new you’ve got to try it, allow for errors, and then try it again. Take a risk with a new behavior. However, be thoughtful about where you experiment. I would not suggest trying a new way of presenting in front of the Board. First experiment with simple, low-risk changes, then evolve into more complex changes that may be more risky. The rewards will be worth it.
- “**O**” is for observational learning. There is considerable research on the power of modeling and observational learning. Observe a leader in your organization whom you respect. Take notes on how this person talks, interacts with others, dresses, and other behaviors you would like to emulate. Another suggestion is to interview a leader you admire. Asking someone for help and information is a very high compliment. Again, take notes and decide what you will emulate. Don’t forget to send the individual you interviewed a “thank you note.”
- “**E**” stands for education, which can range from reading books and articles to getting an MBA. Reading is an invaluable wellspring of new ideas and motivation. I suggest that my clients read biographies of famous and infamous business leaders. By reading biographies you can learn how people think, their personality, and truly identify with a particular set of leadership behaviors. Since many of my clients are scientists, engineers, and gifted analytical thinkers, I suggest reading journals with scientific research on leadership. An excellent book to start with is “Good to Great” by Jim Collins. Also, remember the motto “all leaders are readers.”

So choose any or all of the three as learning methods to improve your effectiveness as a leader. None of them are difficult – they simply require time and focused attention. And when you do, the rewards will be many.

As always, we welcome your comments about our tips and suggestions for future tips. Until next month, stay well.

Lois P. Frankel, Ph.D.