

# Get ready for 2021 with leadership principles

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SmartBrief illustration

Leadership will be critical in the year to come, as you navigate uncertainty, fierce competition and resource constraints. One way to get your organization ready for these challenges is to establish leadership principles for your organization.

Leadership principles are like core values specifically for the leaders in your company, and they should be memorable, meaningful, coherent with other expectations and unique.

In this new video, I share some examples of leadership principles and show how to ensure they get the traction you need to raise up great leaders in your company.

*To learn more from Denise Lee Yohn or to book her to speak to your organization, see her [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).*

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## Transcript

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With 2021 just around the corner, now is the time to lay the foundation for a successful year. One way to do that is to establish leadership principles for your organization.

Leadership principles are like core values specifically for the leaders in your company. And they're more important now than ever before, since leadership ability is critical when operating in times of uncertainty, fierce competition or resource constraints -- or all of the above, as the case is for most of us today.

Some companies operate under the premise that everyone is a leader, so they use one set of values for the entire company and provide training or target messaging about them to their leaders. But I recommend developing principles specifically for the leaders in your organization, since their roles and responsibilities require distinct attitudes and behaviors. Plus, explicit leadership principles will facilitate greater alignment among your leaders.

In setting leadership principles, Camille Inge, a consultant at the [Neuroleadership Institute](#), recommends three criteria:

1. **They should be sticky.** Meaning, leaders can remember them.
2. **They should be meaningful.** Leaders should care about them, presumably because they enable them to do their jobs better.
3. **They should be coherent.** Leaders should see that the principles fit with what they're asked to do. They can't be disconnected from the goals they're expected to achieve or the priorities they've been given.

I would add one more requirement: Your leadership principles should be unique. If you use generic platitudes, they will be meaningless. Your leadership principles should define the unique ways your leaders should think and act to achieve the unique goals of your organization.

For example, one of Amazon's leadership principles is "Frugality." The company explains frugality by saying "Accomplish more with less. Constraints breed resourcefulness, self-sufficiency and invention." You can see how this distinctive principle is in part why Amazon is able to offer such low prices.

Or consider how the Marine Corps uses the leadership principle "Employ your command within its capabilities." They elaborate on this with the instructions, "Have a thorough knowledge of the tactical and technical capabilities. Seek out challenging tasks for your unit, but be sure that your unit is prepared." It's a unique principle for a unique organization.

I also like the Marine Corps example because it shows how your leadership principles need to be fleshed out with definitions and examples. At the [Neuroleadership Institute's 2020 summit](#), a representative from a public utility company explained how her organization made their leadership principles explicit.

For the principle "Create clarity," they provided a definition – "Ensure shared understanding of what needs to be achieved." And they included a sample behavior:

“Before I talk about the ‘what’ of a change or task, I will create clarity by starting with the ‘why.’”

Once you’ve articulated your leadership principles, you should provide training on them just as you would for leadership skills. And make them part of your performance review and planning process for leaders, so they have real impact.

Now is the perfect time to get ready for 2021 with leadership principles.