

# Leadership lessons from Ted Lasso

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By Denise Lee Yohn Published: June 13, 2023



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Ted Lasso, the leading character in the popular Apple+ series by the same name, provides an excellent model of exceptional organizational leadership. The leadership lessons from Lasso are about coaching, changing and character-building. This new Smartbrief on Leadership video by leadership keynote speaker Denise Lee Yohn provides explains how Lasso shows what great leaders do.

## ***Video Transcript:***

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Now that the last episode of the popular Apple+ series Ted Lasso has aired, it's a good time to reflect on the leadership lessons that we can learn from the show's leading character.

Even if you're not familiar with the show, you can learn a lot about what great leaders do from Ted Lasso, an American college football coach who moved to London to coach a struggling soccer team. Lasso's folksy style may seem goofy at first, but he provides an excellent model of effective organizational leadership.

The first leadership lesson from Lasso is about coaching — or rather, leadership IS coaching. Coaching involves helping people develop the skillset and mindset they need to win. Instead of telling people what to do, coaches set goals and provide opportunities for them to learn what they need to do to achieve them. And, instead of giving answers, coaches ask questions to draw out the insights and natural instincts that people have within themselves.

Lasso demonstrated the power of coaching when he took his team on a field trip to the London sewer system. He wanted his team to ignore the bad press they had received and renew their trust in each other, so he arranged for them to hear the story about how the new sewers were developed by a civil engineer who was not bothered by what other people thought. Lasso effectively coached the team to refocus by allowing them to realize the story's relevance to their own situation.

We also learn from Lasso that great leadership involves changing. At a low point in one season, Lasso comes up with a totally different approach to playing the game — and he wants the team to implement it in the game they have that weekend. It's a risky move since they have little opportunity to train for it, but Lasso insists it's worth a try.

Traditional leadership tends to eschew mid-course corrections and unproven approaches. Leaders are taught not to make dramatic changes without thoroughly testing them first. And there are times when staying on course makes sense. But in situations as dire as Lasso's, leaders must be willing to take risks and try different approaches — even if the outcomes are uncertain. By definition, leading is not about following. So, instead of following the same playbook that everyone else does or following the established game plan when it's clearly no longer working, great leaders lead like Lasso and embrace change.

Finally, Lasso teaches us that great leadership makes character-building the priority. Great leaders care as much about the developing people's potential as their performance because better people make better businesses. And great leaders help their people develop the integrity and sincerity they need to become great leaders themselves.

To the chagrin of his team's owner and his colleagues, Ted Lasso states that he's more concerned with developing his players into good men than into winning players. And he demonstrates unwavering belief in their potential for becoming men of great character. This conviction was on full display during a recent episode when his assistant coach, Roy Kent,

expressed regret for leaving his former team when he realized he was no longer playing at the level he once did. Kent wonders if he should have stayed and “enjoyed himself.” “But that is not who I am,” he concludes. When Lasso replies, “not yet,” he shows that he believes in Kent — that he sees the potential in him and that he is committed to helping him become the kind of man he aspires to be.

So, the lessons from Lasso are that great leadership is about coaching, changing and character-building. It’s important to note that this type of leadership leads Lasso to success on and off the field. And it can do the same for you.

*To book brand leadership expert Denise Lee Yohn to inspire and teach your people to become great leaders, see her [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).*

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