Become A Great Leader

Jack Zenger is an expert in leadership development who has authored several books on the topic. From his writings, here are his top 10 rules for becoming a great leader:

1. Ask instead of answer
Don't immediately give people the answer when they come to you with a question. Instead, ask them what they think. It's the leader's job to develop people. To just give them the answer is to have missed a real opportunity to show that you respect them and their ideas.

2. Give positive feedback
It's important to have positive interactions between you and your employees. If you don't agree with an idea, ask the idea generator to think about it and talk about how it would play out. This will force your team to think through their suggestions and see where their failings are. Remember, as a leader, you may not always be right.

3. Engage
When you come into your office in the morning, don't turn on your computer until you have walked around and connected with people first. Leadership is all about motivating people, and motivating people is all about having a connection with them.

4. Put employees first
In every organization, there are four different constituencies: shareholders, senior managers, customers and employees. There are examples of organizations who have consciously put employees first, customers second, shareholders third and managers last. If you treat the employee with great dignity and respect, they in turn will treat customers the same way.

5. Seek feedback
Periodically, a manager should wander around and meet with employees and ask, "Tell me something you think I don't want to know and don't want to hear." It may take people a while to figure out that you are serious, but then, they will tell you. One thing managers and leaders have in short supply is truth. Things get filtered as they go up in the organization. You have to work to get accurate data. People will tell you if you ask.

6. Be an example
As a leader you are the role model and people are watching you 24/7; you are never off-stage. If you want the organization to be responsive to customers, you have to be responsive to customers. If you want your people to maintain good working hours, you need to maintain good working hours.

7. Practice self-development
If you want your organization to perform at a high level and improve over time, you have to improve over time. You need to have a personal plan of development for yourself. Doing this will provide a great example to everyone in the organization and says no matter who you are, we all can get better.

8. Delegate with purpose
Make sure your people know that you are not only concerned about them getting their work done, but you are also concerned about them as a human being -- about them growing in their career.
One way to do that is to delegate an assignment and tell them the reason you've asked them to do the task is because it will help them and their professional development.

9. Set stretch goals
Nothing unites a group more than pursuing a lofty target. Try setting a stretch goal for your team, but make sure it's reasonable. If the goal is unreasonable, it can be de-motivating.

10. Listen
The ability to listen well is at the heart of being a good leader. Try removing distractions when you are speaking with someone, start making notes when they talk and pay attention to body language to get a real sense of their feelings. Try not to just listen to the words said, but really think about the message someone is trying to convey.