

I have taught leadership to graduate students for over 15 years and have been developing grassroots leaders for over 35 years. After reading the Time story, I decided to highlight some of Mandela's key leadership lessons and my thoughts on them in this week's Rich Tips.

1. **Courage is not the absence of fear, it is inspiring others to move beyond their fears.** The unknown can be scary. Being in prison can be scary. (Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years.) Mandela said, "I can't pretend that I'm brave and that I can beat the whole world, but as a leader, you cannot let people know." Many times we are scared beyond belief but we need to represent confidence and optimism to others.
2. **Lead from the front, but don't leave your base behind.** People are expecting you to lead but it is critical that you don't get too far ahead of your base supporters that you leave them behind. Things will be better in the long run, Mandela always said, but we need to slowly and deliberately bring people with us.
3. **Lead from the back and let others believe they are in front.** Mandela would always listen to the discussion and the debates before he would enter into the conversation. He said that a "chief's job was not to tell people what to do but to form a consensus. Don't enter the debate too early."
4. **Know your enemy and learn about his favorite sport.** If you want to be a great leader, it's important to unify your friends and understand your enemies. Mandela used this strategy in two ways: to understand and speak his opponent's language (this would enable him to understand the strengths and weaknesses of his opponents) and to formulate strategies and tactics to win.
5. **Keep your friends close and your rivals even closer.** Exceptional leaders understand that you must charm your rivals and make sure you involve them in your circle of influence. According to the Time article, Mandela believed that he could control his rivals by embracing them, as they were more dangerous outside his circle of influence. Mandela valued loyalty but was never obsessed by it; he understood that people acted on their own self-interests.
6. **Appearance matters and remember to smile.** Mandela was always aware of his appearances: how he looked, acted, and dressed. He was sure to wear the proper fatigues with a beard when he was photographed. He understood that symbols matter as much as substance and that smiling represented his lack of bitterness.
7. **Nothing is black or white.** A great leader has to be comfortable with uncertainty and contradictions. Mandela believed that life is never either/or. Decisions are always complex and there are always competing factors. We should not be looking for simple explanations because in reality things are never as straightforward as they seem.
8. **Quitting is a way of leading too.** A key to real leadership is knowing when it is time to step down and let others lead. A great leader always trains others to take over for him/her. Knowing when and how to abandon a failed idea, task, or relationship is a sign of greatness. In the history of Africa there have only been a handful of leaders that have known when it was time to step down. Nelson Mandela was one of these leaders.

From www.richardmale.com