

Nine Leadership Principles for Backbone Leaders

Principle	Definition
View your system through the lens of complexity	In addition to the metaphor of a machine or a military organization
Build a good-enough vision	Provide minimum specifications, rather than trying to plan every little detail
When life is far from certain, lead with clockware and swarmware in tandem	Balance data and intuition, planning and acting, safety and risk, giving due honor to each

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Tune your place to the edge	Foster the "right" degree of information flow, diversity and difference, connections inside and outside the organization, power differential and anxiety, instead of controlling information, forcing agreement, dealing separately with contentious groups, working systematically down all the layers of the hierarchy in sequence and seeking comfort
Uncover and work with paradox and tension	Do not shy away from them as if they were unnatural
Go for multiple actions at the fringes, let direction arise	You don't have to be "sure" before you proceed with anything

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Listen to the shadow system	That is, realize that informal relationships, gossip, rumor and hallway conversations contribute significantly to agents' mental models and subsequent action
Grow complex systems by chunking	Allow complex systems to emerge out of the links among simple systems that work well and are capable of operating independently
Mix cooperation with competition	It's not one or the other