



# STEPPING INTO LEADERSHIP

"And David shepherded them  
with integrity of heart; with  
skillful hands he led them."

— Psalm 78:72

Introduction

**S**tep forward with confidence into a leadership role, where your vision can inspire and transform not only clients but your community. Your impact goes beyond the artistry of a perfect cut or color—it's about setting trends, mentoring others, and driving innovation in an evolving freelance industry. Freelance hairstylists today are carving out new paths, redefining success on their own terms. Industry trends indicate significant growth in the independent stylist sector in recent years. Freelance hairstylists are influencing every part of the industry, from client engagement to sustainable practices, yet many freelancers hesitate to see themselves as leaders.<sup>[1]</sup>

This chapter is an invitation to embrace leadership as an essential aspect of freelance success. We'll explore how creating a clear vision can be a transformative anchor, how seeking and providing mentorship can unlock potential, and how innovation keeps you relevant in a fast-paced market. Real-world examples from industry trailblazers will illuminate what it means to lead with purpose and conviction. We'll draw insights from the journeys of pioneering freelance stylists whose vision, mentorship approach, and innovation have redefined segments of the industry. Additionally, proven leadership strategies will guide our approach to vision alignment and freelance leadership development.

Whether you're a seasoned stylist or a new freelancer, the principles in this chapter will help you harness your unique vision, leverage your strengths, and inspire others. Together, let's shape a leadership journey that transforms your career and leaves an enduring legacy in the hairstyling world.

## Personal Anecdote: The Moment I Realized I Was Leading

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I remember a day that shifted everything for me. I was working independently, focused solely on perfecting my craft, when a group of emerging stylists approached me for advice on a new technique I had developed. Their genuine curiosity and respect made me realize that, despite not working in a traditional salon environment, I was influencing and guiding others.

This recognition transformed my self-perception—from seeing myself merely as an independent artisan to embracing my role as an industry leader. I began to share my insights more openly, mentor those around me, and approach each client interaction with the confidence that my work was setting trends and inspiring peers. That moment taught me that leadership isn't about titles or positions; it's about the impact you have on others through your passion, knowledge, and willingness to lift others up.

**Key Insight:** Leadership in hairstyling doesn't require a formal title or salon ownership—it emerges naturally when you combine expertise with a genuine desire to inspire and guide others.

## I. The Vital Role of Vision in Freelance Leadership

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### 1. Start with Your "Why"

In the daily hustle of freelance life, it's easy to get swept up in the immediate demands—clients, deadlines, bills. However, effective freelance leaders need a guiding vision, a North Star that inspires and aligns each decision. Your "why" is a foundational motivator that brings meaning to your work and clarifies your professional purpose.[^3]

Consider the example of independent educators who have developed specialized training in niche areas of hairstyling. These freelancers didn't just teach techniques; they had a mission to preserve specific artistry traditions while empowering other independents to build unique careers. Their teaching platforms demonstrate that when you clarify your purpose, you inspire and rally a community around shared values.

To develop your "why," reflect on what drives your passion for hairstyling. Is it the transformative power of a well-crafted style? A desire to inspire confidence in clients? This core motivation forms the bedrock of your leadership vision.

#### **Example Reflection Prompts:**

- What motivates you to excel in hairstyling?
- What lasting impact do you want to create for your clients, community, or industry?

Discovering my core purpose was a gradual yet profound journey. I spent countless hours reflecting on why I was drawn to hairstyling—not just for the art, but for its power to transform lives. This deep introspection led me to understand that my true calling was to instill confidence and empower others through creativity. Once I was clear about my "why," every business decision began to reflect that purpose. I shifted my focus from quick wins to building meaningful, lasting relationships with my clients, ensuring that each service was not just a transaction but an experience. The tangible result was a more loyal clientele and a business model that aligned perfectly with my personal values.

## 2. Dream Big, Then Bigger

Once you've defined your "why," let yourself dream. Envision an ambitious future, not just for your career but for the broader hairstyling industry. Look at stylists who've set visionary goals; for instance, Joshua Coombes, the London-based hairstylist, took a unique approach by founding **#DoSomethingForNothing**, offering free haircuts to the homeless. His dream went beyond hairstyling—he wanted to use his craft to foster empathy and social impact. Such a vision can inspire significant change and encourage others to join you on your journey.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Example Reflection Prompts:

- What legacy do you want to leave in the hairstyling industry?
- How do you want to challenge existing norms or set new standards?

### 3. Distill and Communicate

A vision is most powerful when it's clearly articulated. Craft a succinct vision statement that captures your purpose and goals. Share it across your brand platforms—website, social media, client communications. This consistency builds credibility, making it clear what you stand for and attracting clients and collaborators who resonate with your values.

**Example Vision Statement:** "To empower clients to embrace their unique beauty and inspire a movement of freelance stylists who prioritize sustainability and creativity."

### 4. Leadership in Action: Putting Vision Into Practice

- **Write Your Vision Statement:** Display it where you'll see it every day, whether it's your mirror, workstation, or journal. Let it be a constant reminder of the bigger picture you're working towards.
- **Embed Vision into Branding:** Align your online presence, client interactions, and aesthetic with your vision for cohesive branding. Consistency reinforces credibility.

- **Use Vision as a Decision Tool:** When faced with opportunities or challenges, ask: "Does this align with my vision?" Let your answer guide your path forward. Remember, your vision is a living document. As you grow and the industry evolves, revisit and refine it. The key is to always stay true to the core values and aspirations that drive you.

## II. The Transformative Power of Mentorship

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### 1. Seeking Mentorship as a Freelance Leader

In freelancing, mentorship bridges the gap of solitary work, offering opportunities to learn from seasoned professionals, gain industry insights, and expand networks. Many industry leaders began as independent stylists who connected with mentors who shared not only technical knowledge but also business acumen and leadership insights.[^5]

Consider the journey of Jill Buck, an independent stylist who sought mentorship from established experts in precision cutting. Through these relationships, Buck not only refined her technical skills but also gained valuable insights on building her personal brand and developing educational content. Today, she's known for her meticulous cutting techniques and her ability to teach others, demonstrating how mentorship can transform a solo practitioner into an industry influencer.

## Steps to Find and Connect with Mentors:

1. **Identify Desired Skills and Traits:** Define the qualities you want in a mentor. Do you admire someone known for their creative color techniques, their business acumen, or their client-centered approach? Look for mentors who can provide the guidance you need in specific areas.
2. **Research Potential Mentors:** Reach out through industry networking events, social media, or local beauty associations. Platforms like Hairbrained and Behind the Chair feature many hairstyling icons who offer mentorship or educational courses.
3. **Make a Thoughtful Approach:** When reaching out, be specific about what you hope to gain from mentorship and why you admire their work. Propose a flexible arrangement, such as monthly virtual coffee chats or shadowing sessions, to show your commitment without imposing on their time.

### Example Approach Template:

Dear [Mentor's Name],

I hope this message finds you well. My name is [Your Name], and I've long admired your work, especially your innovative approach to [specific skill]. As I develop my own freelance career, I would be incredibly grateful for your guidance in [mention specific goals]. I'd love the opportunity to connect and discuss this possibility. Thank you for considering my request.

Best regards, [Your Name]



**Be an Engaged Mentee:** Actively participating in mentorship means showing up prepared, following through on suggestions, and finding ways to offer value in return. This could be as simple as sharing your unique insights or assisting on projects. Engaged mentees demonstrate commitment and respect, often leading to a more fruitful mentorship experience.

## 2. Providing Mentorship as a Freelance Leader

Mentorship is a two-way street; as you advance in your career, consider giving back by mentoring others. Research shows that freelancers who mentor others report higher job satisfaction and professional growth. By mentoring, you create a ripple effect that strengthens the industry, fostering the next generation of talent.

Take the example of Matt Swinney, who built his career as an independent session stylist before becoming an educator. Despite maintaining his freelance work, Swinney consistently mentors emerging stylists, sharing both technical expertise and insights on navigating the industry as an independent professional. His approach to mentorship focuses on empowering others to find their unique path rather than following a predetermined career template.

## **Steps to Be an Effective Mentor:**

1. **Share Your Journey with Authenticity:** Transparency about your own challenges and achievements builds trust and helps mentees feel more connected. Sharing specific experiences—whether it's a difficult client situation or a breakthrough moment—provides mentees with relatable examples.
2. **Customize Your Approach:** Recognize that each mentee is unique. Take time to understand their goals, strengths, and growth areas. Tailor your guidance to their specific needs and learning style.
3. **Empower, Don't Prescribe:** Your role is to guide and advise, not dictate. Ask questions that prompt mentees to think critically and arrive at their own solutions. The goal is to foster independence, not dependence.

## **Ways to Offer Mentorship:**

- **Start a Peer Mentorship Group:** Connect with fellow freelance stylists to create a support group where you can all share insights, challenges, and growth strategies.
- **Lead Workshops or Classes:** Share your expertise by hosting workshops, either virtually or locally, on topics such as bridal styling, color correction, or business management.
- **Highlight Emerging Talent on Social Media:** Use your platform to recognize new talent, providing exposure and encouragement to emerging stylists. This simple act can have a significant impact on their confidence and career growth.

An unexpected lesson in leadership came when I began mentoring a young stylist who was brimming with talent but lacked confidence. As I guided her through new techniques and shared insights from my own journey, I was challenged to articulate the very strategies that had fueled my success. This mentoring experience forced me to reflect on my practices, often uncovering nuances I had long taken for granted. In teaching her, I not only helped her grow but also rediscovered fresh perspectives on my own artistry. This process underscored a fundamental truth: true leadership is a two-way street, where nurturing others invariably refines and enriches your own abilities.

### 3. Leadership in Action: Fostering Mentorship Connections

- **Join Industry Mentorship Programs:** Participate in structured mentorship programs offered by professional organizations or local cosmetology schools to facilitate impactful connections.
- **Offer Workshops or Seminars:** Lead a workshop or seminar on a topic of your expertise. Teaching is a powerful form of mentorship that can reach a broad audience.
- **Start a Peer Mentorship Circle:** Gather a group of fellow freelance hairstylists to meet regularly, share challenges, brainstorm solutions, and hold each other accountable to growth goals.

- **Highlight Emerging Talent:** Use your platform—social media, blog, or events—to feature and elevate up-and-coming talent. A simple shoutout or feature can be a game-changer for an emerging freelancer.

Remember, mentorship is a two-way street. Approach every interaction, whether as a mentee or mentor, with an openness to learn and grow. The most impactful mentorship relationships are built on a foundation of mutual respect, trust, and commitment to shared success.

### III. Embracing Change and Innovation

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#### 1. Stay Curious: Commit to Lifelong Learning

Innovation and adaptability are critical for freelance hairstylists navigating a fast-evolving beauty industry. The COVID-19 pandemic starkly illustrated this need, forcing stylists worldwide to pivot their businesses virtually overnight. Many independent stylists quickly transitioned to virtual consultations and tutorial videos, effectively reshaping client engagement during lockdowns. Stylists who embraced this adaptability emerged stronger, showcasing the power of innovation in securing long-term success.

Commit to continuous learning. Attend industry conferences, enroll in online courses, follow influencers who are pushing the boundaries of the craft. The more you expose yourself to new ideas, the more fodder you have for innovation.

## **Example:**

- **Stay Curious Action:** Subscribe to leading hairstyling journals and participate in webinars to stay updated on the latest techniques and trends.

### **Steps to Cultivate Curiosity and Stay Updated:**

1. **Subscribe to Industry Publications and Platforms:** Stay informed by reading publications like Salon Today, Behind the Chair, and Modern Salon. These sources provide regular updates on new trends, products, and techniques, as well as profiles of trailblazing stylists.
2. **Attend Online Courses and Webinars:** Platforms like Hairbrained, Pulp Riot's education hub, and L'Oréal Access offer specialized courses on topics such as color theory, texture, and sustainable practices. Many courses offer certifications, adding valuable credentials to your professional portfolio.
3. **Network with Other Innovators:** Joining industry forums or groups, such as the Professional Beauty Association (PBA) or Hairbrained, connects you with stylists who share insights, experiences, and the latest industry techniques.

## **2. Embrace Experimentation and Flexibility**

Experimentation is a key driver of innovation. Many freelance hairstylists hesitate to try new approaches, fearing failure or client dissatisfaction. However, experimentation allows stylists to discover new services, products, and techniques that can set them apart. Independent colorists who regularly ex-

periment with new formulations and application methods often develop signature techniques that attract a loyal clientele and social media following.

### **Steps to Embrace Experimentation:**

1. **Pilot New Services on Selected Clients:** Start by offering a new service—such as balayage, fantasy color, or scalp treatments—to trusted clients at a discounted rate. Gather feedback to refine and perfect the service.
2. **Document and Analyze Results:** Track the results of your experiments, noting client reactions, challenges, and outcomes. This data can help you determine if the new service is worth formally adding to your portfolio.
3. **Develop a Feedback Loop with Clients:** Let clients know you value their input, especially when testing new techniques or products. This not only builds rapport but also provides valuable insights into client preferences.

### **Example Experiments:**

- **DIY Kits and Virtual Consultations:** Like many stylists during the pandemic, consider offering virtual consultations for clients who want to maintain their style at home or experiment with DIY kits for touch-ups.
- **Eco-Friendly Practices:** Experiment with sustainable products or low-waste techniques to attract eco-conscious clients. Many stylists have adopted refillable product systems and compostable tools, aligning their brand with sustainable values.

### 3. Seek Diverse Perspectives: Learn from Other Industries

Innovation often flourishes at the intersection of different industries. By connecting with professionals outside of hairstyling—such as fashion designers, makeup artists, or technology experts—stylists can gain fresh insights and inspire creative breakthroughs. Fashion houses often collaborate with freelance stylists to integrate hairstyling into fashion storytelling, emphasizing the role of hairstylists in broader creative industries.

#### **Steps to Gain Diverse Perspectives:**

1. **Collaborate with Other Creatives:** Partner with makeup artists, photographers, or fashion designers for joint projects. These collaborations often yield unique style concepts, positioning you as a versatile and innovative stylist.
2. **Attend Cross-Industry Events:** Participate in events such as fashion weeks, beauty conventions, and wellness summits. Observing trends in these areas can offer inspiration for hairstyling techniques or business strategies.
3. **Join Local Creative Groups:** Connect with creatives in your area through meetups or social media groups. Many cities have creative groups where artists from different fields exchange ideas and offer feedback.

#### **Examples of Cross-Industry Innovation:**

- **Virtual Styling Consultations:** Inspired by tech-based consultations in other industries, some hairstylists now offer personalized virtual styling sessions for long-distance clients.

- **Social Media Storytelling:** Stylists can learn branding and storytelling strategies from influencers in adjacent fields, such as beauty and wellness, applying those strategies to enhance their own brand presence.

#### 4. Leadership in Action: Innovating Your Freelance Business

Implementing innovation into a freelance business requires structure, commitment, and vision. Adopting a business model that prioritizes regular innovation sessions or "CEO Days" helps stylists plan and experiment with new approaches systematically. Many successful freelance stylists have exemplified business innovation by continuously reinventing their styling techniques and social media presence, keeping their brand fresh and highly sought after.

#### **Actionable Steps to Innovate Your Business:**

1. **Schedule Monthly "CEO Days":** Dedicate a day each month to focus solely on business strategy and innovation. Use it to analyze trends, brainstorm new offerings, and map out implementation plans.
2. **Leverage Client Feedback for Innovation:** Create feedback channels, such as follow-up emails or surveys, to understand client preferences and unmet needs. Use this data to tailor new services or enhance existing ones.



3. **Incorporate Emerging Technologies:** Partner with a tech-savvy friend or hire a consultant to help you integrate new technologies into your business. From virtual reality hair consultations to AI-powered color matching, innovation often lies at the intersection of creativity and tech.
4. **Evaluate and Adapt Regularly:** Reassess your innovation efforts quarterly, examining what worked and what didn't. Adjust your strategies based on these assessments to continually refine your approach.

By treating innovation as an ongoing practice, freelance stylists can not only adapt to industry changes but actively drive them, positioning themselves as leaders and trendsetters in their field.

## IV. Building Your Network of Support and Collaboration

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### 1. Lead with Generosity

The myth of the solo entrepreneur is just that—a myth. Behind every successful freelance leader is a robust network of supporters, collaborators, and champions. Approach every interaction with a "give first" mindset. Share your knowledge, make introductions, offer support—without expecting anything in return. The more value you provide to your network, the more inclined they'll be to support you when you need it.[^6]

### **Example:**

- **Generosity Action:** Offer free consultations or hair-styling sessions to emerging stylists in exchange for their insights and feedback.

## 2. Prioritize Quality Over Quantity

Focus on building genuine, mutually beneficial relationships, not just amassing a large number of superficial connections. Regularly check in with your contacts, express appreciation for their support, and look for ways to deepen the bond.

### **Example:**

- **Quality Relationships Action:** Schedule monthly catch-up calls with key contacts to discuss their projects and offer assistance where possible.

## 3. Diversify Your Connections

While it's important to have strong ties within the hairstyling community, don't limit your network to just your immediate industry. Cultivate relationships with professionals from related fields—photography, fashion, beauty, wellness. These cross-disciplinary connections can open up exciting opportunities for collaboration and cross-pollination of ideas.

### **Example:**

- **Diversify Connections Action:** Partner with a local photographer to offer bundled services for photoshoots, enhancing both your portfolios.

## 4. Leadership in Action: Strengthening Your Network

- **Attend Industry Events Regularly:** Set a goal to make meaningful new connections at each event and follow up within 48 hours to keep the momentum going.
- **Volunteer Your Skills:** Offer your hairstyling services for local charities or community events. This not only expands your network but also positions you as a leader committed to making a difference.
- **Start a "Collaboration Club":** Gather a group of fellow creatives to meet monthly, brainstorm joint projects, cross-promote each other's work, and hold each other accountable to networking goals.
- **Create a "Relationship Tracker" Spreadsheet:** Manage your network by noting key details about each contact, the last time you connected, and next steps for nurturing the relationship. Schedule regular "outreach hours" to ensure you're consistently staying in touch.

Remember, your network is your net worth. By investing consistently in building and nurturing authentic relationships, you create a web of support that will sustain and propel your freelance career for years to come.

## V. Micro-Leadership: Daily Practices for Freelance Leaders

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Leadership isn't reserved for those managing large teams or owning salons. For freelance hairstylists, leadership manifests through small, consistent actions that gradually build influence and inspire

others. These "micro-leadership" practices can be integrated into your daily routine, regardless of your career stage or working environment.[^7]

## 1. Small Actions with Big Impact

Leadership begins with mindful, intentional choices that reflect your values and vision. These seemingly small actions can have a ripple effect, influencing clients, peers, and the broader industry.

### **Daily Micro-Leadership Practices:**

- **Morning Intention Setting:** Begin each day by setting a specific leadership intention, such as "Today I will inspire creativity in each client interaction" or "Today I will share one valuable tip with a fellow stylist."
- **Client Education Moments:** Use every service as an opportunity to educate clients about proper hair care, styling techniques, or product choices. This positions you as an authority and empowers clients to make informed decisions.
- **Technique Sharing:** When you discover a helpful shortcut or technique, share it with other freelancers in your community rather than keeping it to yourself. This generosity builds your reputation as a collaborative leader.
- **Active Listening:** Practice focused, empathetic listening during client consultations and conversations with peers. True leaders listen more than they speak, gathering insights that inform better decisions.

- **Positive Industry Representation:** Conduct yourself professionally in all interactions, knowing that you represent not just yourself but the hairstyling profession. Small courtesies like punctuality and follow-through build trust in you and the industry.

## 2. Digital Micro-Leadership

In today's connected world, leadership extends into digital spaces. Even modest social media accounts can be platforms for influence and inspiration when used intentionally.

### **Digital Leadership Actions:**

- **Share Educational Content:** Post quick tutorials, product reviews, or styling tips that provide genuine value to followers. Even a simple Instagram Story demonstrating a blow-drying technique can position you as a generous knowledge-sharer.
- **Celebrate Others' Work:** Use your platform to highlight and praise exceptional work by other stylists. This not only supports them but demonstrates your commitment to community over competition.
- **Engage Thoughtfully:** Leave substantive comments on industry discussions rather than just likes or generic responses. Adding your unique perspective contributes to the professional dialogue.
- **Curate Quality Information:** Share articles, research, and resources that elevate the profession's standards and knowledge base. This establishes you as someone committed to industry advancement.

### 3. Client-Centered Leadership

Every client interaction is an opportunity to demonstrate leadership through exceptional service and ethical practices.

#### **Client Leadership Practices:**

- **Ethical Recommendations:** Suggest only services and products that truly benefit the client, even when it means a smaller sale. This integrity builds trust and positions you as a client advocate rather than just a service provider.
- **Setting Industry Standards:** Implement best practices in sanitation, sustainability, and inclusive service, even when they require extra effort. These actions elevate standards for the entire profession.
- **Transparent Communication:** Be straightforward about pricing, timing, and realistic service outcomes. This honesty changes client expectations in positive ways that benefit all stylists.
- **Feedback Solicitation:** Actively seek client feedback and implement improvements based on their suggestions. This demonstrates a growth mindset that inspires others.

### 4. The Freelance Leadership Progression

Leadership development for freelancers follows a natural progression as your influence grows. Understanding these stages helps you recognize your current leadership level and identify next steps for growth.

Leadership Stage	Primary Focus	Key Actions	Impact Scope
Self-Leadership	Personal excellence	Mastering skills, continuing education, self-discipline	Individual growth
Client Leadership	Exceptional service	Education, consultations, building trust	Direct client base
Peer Leadership	Supporting colleagues	Technique sharing, mentorship, collaboration	Local stylist community
Industry Leadership	Advancing the profession	Education, advocacy, innovation	Broader hairstyling field

Remember that you can demonstrate leadership at any stage of your career. A new freelancer carefully documenting their work and sharing honest reflections about their learning journey is practicing leadership just as surely as an experienced stylist developing educational content or advocating for industry changes.

## 5. Practical Examples of Freelance Leadership

These real-world examples demonstrate how independent stylists have exercised leadership through everyday actions:

- **The Standards-Setter:** A freelance stylist who consistently uses and promotes sustainable, cruelty-free products influences both clients and peers to make more environmentally conscious choices. This subtle leadership gradually shifts industry norms without requiring a formal leadership position.

- **The Community Builder:** An independent stylist who started a simple monthly meet-up for local freelancers to share techniques and support each other has created a valuable network that enhances everyone's work. This modest initiative demonstrates leadership through community building.
- **The Knowledge Sharer:** A freelancer who regularly posts detailed breakdowns of their color formulations and techniques on social media, freely sharing information that others might keep proprietary, elevates the skill level of their entire digital community.
- **The Boundary Establisher:** A stylist who implements and clearly communicates professional policies regarding scheduling, cancellations, and consultations helps clients understand the value of professional services while setting standards that benefit all stylists.



Over the years, I've learned that leadership isn't defined by grand gestures but by the consistency of small, intentional actions. Every day, I start with a brief moment of reflection and set clear intentions—not just for my creative output, but for how I can inspire and support my community. Whether it's sharing a quick styling tip on social media, sending a thoughtful note to a client, or setting aside time for informal check-ins with emerging talents, these practices have gradually built a strong, supportive network. These daily habits have not only enhanced my own discipline and focus but have also cultivated trust and a sense of belonging among my clients and peers, ultimately amplifying my influence in the hairstyling industry.

## VI. Conclusion: Stepping into Leadership

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Leadership in freelancing isn't confined to titles or formalities—it's about shaping your professional world with vision, purpose, and adaptability. Throughout this chapter, we explored the pillars of effective freelance leadership: setting a compelling vision, seeking and giving mentorship, embracing change and innovation, cultivating a robust network, and implementing daily micro-leadership practices. Each section emphasized that leadership, especially

in the freelance hairstyling industry, is as much about personal development as it is about impact on clients, peers, and the larger industry.

Vision is the cornerstone of leadership, and a well-defined vision serves as a guiding compass. As we've seen, having a vision grounded in personal values and industry awareness doesn't just benefit individual careers—it raises the standard for the entire field. Mentorship, both sought and offered, is the path to accelerated growth and a thriving community, passing down skills, knowledge, and confidence to the next generation. Innovation, meanwhile, is essential in an industry that thrives on trends and change. Freelancers who lead the way in adopting new techniques, technologies, and approaches will stand out in a crowded market.

The micro-leadership practices we've explored demonstrate that you don't need formal authority to be influential. Through consistent small actions—from how you educate clients to how you share knowledge with peers—you build a leadership presence that transcends traditional hierarchies. A strong network of peers and collaborators acts as both a safety net and springboard, bolstering resilience, creating opportunities, and fostering professional fulfillment.

Every freelance hairstylist has the opportunity to redefine leadership on their own terms, inspiring those around them and shaping the future of the beauty industry. Leadership is a choice. It's a daily decision to show up not just as a skilled technician but as a visionary, a trailblazer, an uplifter of others.

It's a commitment to not just doing your best work but to being your best self—for your clients, your community, and your craft.

## Case Study: Joshua Coombes - Leadership Through Social Impact

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### **Real-Life Example: Joshua Coombes, Street Barber and Social Entrepreneur**

**Challenge:** Joshua Coombes wanted to use his hairstyling skills to make a meaningful difference in his community while building his professional reputation. He noticed the disconnect between the beauty industry's focus on glamour and the real needs of vulnerable populations in his city.

**Solution:** Coombes created the #DoSomethingForNothing movement, taking his barbering skills to the streets to provide free haircuts for homeless individuals. He documented these acts of service on social media, not for self-promotion, but to inspire others to use their professional skills for social good. He trained other barbers to join the movement and collaborated with homeless charities to maximize impact.

**Outcome:** The movement has spread globally, with thousands of hairstylists participating in over 30 countries. Coombes has cut hair for hundreds of homeless individuals, been featured in major media outlets, spoken at industry conferences, and inspired

a new model of socially conscious hairstyling. His leadership has elevated both his career and the entire industry's awareness of social responsibility.

**Lessons Learned:** True leadership emerges when you use your professional skills to serve others beyond commercial gain. By addressing real social needs with his expertise, Coombes demonstrated that hairstylists can be powerful agents of positive change, inspiring others to follow his example of purposeful leadership.

### Actionable Steps

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1. **Set three micro-leadership goals for the next 30 days.** These could include mentoring one new stylist, starting an online discussion about industry trends, or organizing a small networking event.
2. **Identify your unique perspective or expertise and find ways to share it.** Whether through social media, workshops, or informal conversations, make your insights accessible to others.
3. **Practice active listening and empathy in all professional interactions.** Leadership is as much about understanding others as it is about being understood.
4. **Commit to lifelong learning.** Stay updated on industry trends, new techniques, and emerging technologies. A leader who stops learning stops leading.

5. **Build genuine relationships within and outside the hairstyling community.** Collaborate with professionals from related fields like fashion, photography, and wellness to broaden your perspective and expand your influence.

### Key Takeaways

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1. **Craft a Compelling Vision:** Develop a vision aligned with your values that acts as a guide for your career. Communicate it clearly to inspire others and keep your goals in focus.
2. **Actively Seek Mentorship:** Accelerate your growth by connecting with mentors and contribute to the community by mentoring others as you advance in your leadership journey.
3. **Cultivate a Mindset of Innovation:** Stay curious, experiment boldly, and proactively adapt to industry changes to maintain relevance and competitiveness.
4. **Build a Diverse, Robust Network:** Develop a network of supporters, collaborators, and champions who can help you navigate the challenges and opportunities of freelance life.
5. **Practice Micro-Leadership Daily:** Integrate small but powerful leadership actions into your daily routine to gradually build influence and inspire others.
6. **Embrace Your Role as a Leader:** Lead not just in title but in mindset and action, recognizing the impact you have on your clients, community, and industry.



## Chapter Quiz

**1. The "Reluctant Leader" story illustrates what misconception about leadership?**

- A)** Leadership is only for extroverts
- B)** Leadership is an inherent trait you're born with or without
- C)** Leadership is a skill that can be developed, and opportunities arise even when unexpected
- D)** Leadership is the same as management

**2. According to Taylor's Leadership Evolution case study, what was the key to effective leadership?**

- A)** Asserting authority and demanding respect
- B)** Leading by example, developing emotional intelligence, and empowering team members
- C)** Making all decisions unilaterally
- D)** Being the most technically skilled person on the team

**3. When developing your leadership style, the chapter recommends:**

- A)** Copying the leadership style of someone you admire exactly
- B)** Being authoritarian to maintain control
- C)** Understanding your strengths, values, and communication style to develop authentic leadership
- D)** Avoiding leadership responsibilities until you're "ready"

**4. How does the chapter define "leadership through community impact"?**

- A)** Only donating money to causes
- B)** Using your platform, skills, and influence to uplift others and create positive change beyond your immediate business
- C)** Leadership is only about managing employees
- D)** Community impact is separate from professional leadership

For answers, see the Quiz Key in the backmatter.



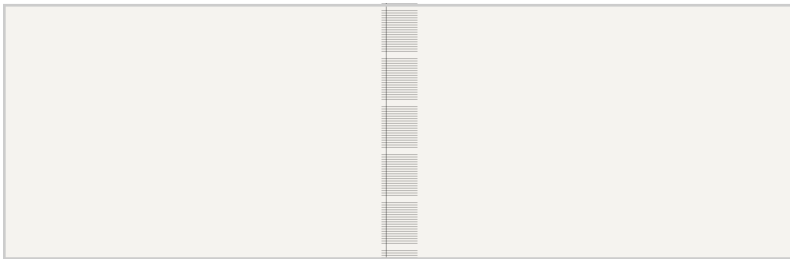


## Chapter Worksheet

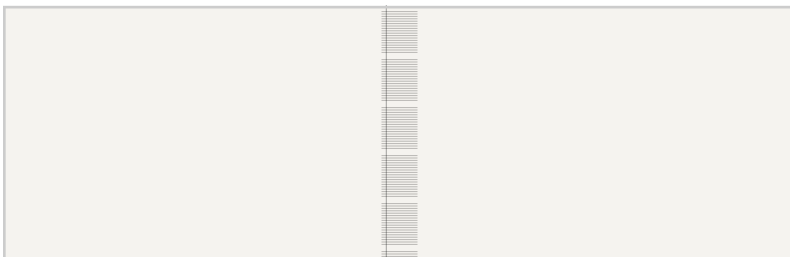
### Reflection Questions:

Take time to consider how this chapter's concepts apply to your own experience and practice.

1. **Assess your current leadership capacity: Where do you already lead (even informally)? What leadership strengths do you possess? Where do you want to grow?**



2. **Define your leadership vision: What kind of leader do you want to become? What values will guide your leadership? How do you want to impact your team, clients, and community?**



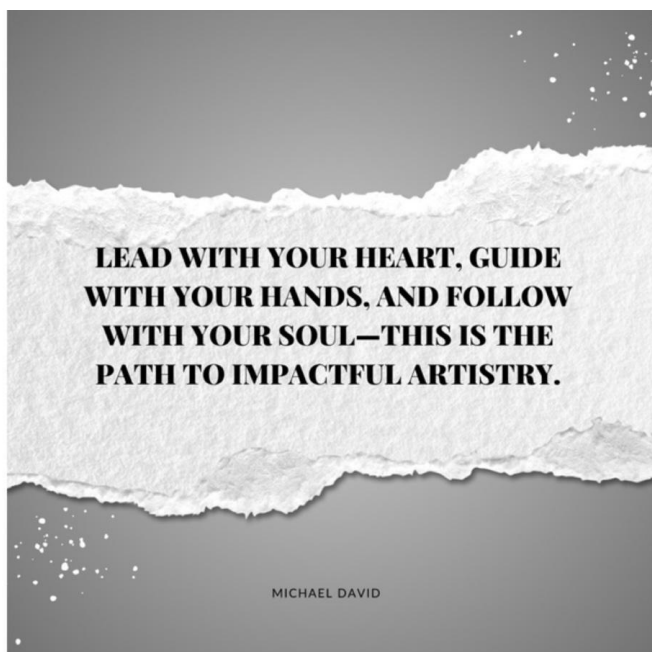
**3. Identify a current leadership challenge you're facing. What skills or support do you need to address it effectively?**

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**4. Create your "Leadership in Action" plan: List 3 specific ways you'll step into leadership this quarter (e.g., mentoring, speaking up in professional settings, starting an initiative, improving team communication).**

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Optional caption for the closing image