I recently went through a book called Trillion Dollar Coach: The Leadership Playbook of Silicon Valley’s Bill Campbell. The book is about Bill Campbell, the ex-football coach who transformed leadership styles of companies like Apple, Google, Intuit and many other start-ups throughout silicon value. Bill built teams and communities that delivered well over a trillion dollars in market value. The book is written by Google’s ex and current leadership team and one of the author is Eric Schmidt, the former Google CEO. This book is based on Schmidt’s own experience with Bill and the interview the authors had with around 80 great leaders who credit Bill Campbell with playing a major role in their success.

Bill’s principles strike a chord with me. I could very well relate to his style as I have seen it working with the best leaders I have worked with. I realised that the principles Bill employed is surprisingly similar with great leaders across the countries, industry and hierarchy. The ability of picking winning behaviours, values and sticking to it in every single time with every single person in every single situation is what separates the goods from the greats.

**1. Your title makes you manager, your people makes you a leader**

Excellent managers accrue respect, they don’t demand it. I think about it so often lately and it comes to me as one of the first foundational principles of leadership. I have seen it happening multiple times. I have seen it breached and then saw the results on the table. This works, and this works every single time. This may be the ‘one’ out of the most effective of Bill’s principles.

**2. It’s the people**

It’s the people, it’s always the people. Topmost priority of any manager is the well-being and success of the people. Managers’ who have understood can have all the earth and heaven at their disposal.

I remember a story about Peter Levchin of PayPal. Whenever a new team member joins his team he will sit down with them and ask their next 3-5 years professional and personal goal. Then he promised to help them in any manner possible to achieve the goal and he is often successful doing that. There is no better way to win people than being an equal stakeholder in all of their success. When you win your people they will do things beyond your imagination to make you successful.

**3. Start with trip reports**

To build rapport, and better relationships amongst team members, start team meetings with trip reports or other types of more personal, non-business topics. Great managers know their member well, how they are as a person, how they think, their aspirations, their world view and support them. Once you build the rapport the ball keeps rolling.

**4. Five words on a white board**

Have a structure for one-on-one’s and take the time to prepare for them they are the best way to help people be more effective and to grow. Give your team members full attention they deserve and never make it a dull routine. A simple test for the employees is when they look forward to the meetings with the leader.

**5. Target to get the best idea not consensus**

One of the best lessons about team-based decision-making is that consensus is impossible to achieve most of the time due to various issues beyond our control. The manager’s job is to run a decision making process that ensures all perspectives get heard and considered, and, if necessary, to break ties and make the decision.

**6. Lead based on first principles**

Define the first principles for the situation, the immutable truths that are the foundation for the company or product, and help guide the decisions from the principles.

**7. Manage the aberrant genius**

I know, this is one of the most controversial takes and the whole tech world is divided on this. “Aberrant genius”, high performing but difficult team members should be tolerated and even protected, as long as their behaviour is not unethical or abusive and their value outweigh the toll their behaviour takes on management, colleagues and teams. I fully stand by this. This is also another way to promote inclusivity and avoiding the dangers of group thinking.

**8. Money is not just about the money**

Compensating people well demonstrates love and respect and ties them strongly to the goals of the company. I think this is something which is common to all the human race. Everyone wants to do their best and get the best of appreciation and reward for their job. There is something to it which illuminates hidden parts of your heart and brain.

**9. Innovation is where the crazy people have stature**

The purpose of a company is to bring a product vision to life. All the other components are in service to the product.Talented people will always challenge the status quo and try to define and go to the next level of innovation to make something better. Understanding that and nurturing them to achieve those goals is another big motivation for people to work for you.

**10. Build an envelope of trust**

Listen intently, practice complete candor, and be an evangelist for trust by believing in people more than they believe in themselves. This is the magic sauce and I have my 100% to this. People tend to go far beyond for the leaders they have trust on and produce outstanding results.

**11. Only coach the coachable**

The trait that makes a person coachable includes honesty and humility, the willingness to persevere and work hard and a constant openness to learning. A leader is no god and do not know any magic beyond the human acts. He has his limitations and one of them is that he can’t coach someone who don’t want to be coached. But I have never seen a great leader who hasn’t made the hardest effort to coach everyone and gave everyone a fair share of their due. People are changeable, and they change positively with the right approach and patience while respecting their boundaries.

**12. Practice free form listening**

Listen to people with your full and undivided attention. Don’t think ahead to what you are going to say next. And ask questions to get to the real issue. This is another superpower in your kitty. Time is scarce more so in leadership positions. When you give someone time you also show that you value them. And everyone feels the needs to be listened, understood. This is one of the great free perks you can give any human being. Great leaders make time to listen to their people’s opinion, issues and find innovative ways to connect to their people no matter how busy they are.

Another Peter Levchin story, excerpts from the [Inc article](https://www.inc.com/magazine/201505/liz-welch/max-levchin-way-i-work.html). I know I am repeating him, but he is one of the leaders I truly admire and it's just a coincidence that I could remember these stories.

“I travel a lot, so when I'm there, I want to be available. I have two desks on different sides of the office, but I rarely sit at either. Instead, I usually sit at the very center of the office in the cafeteria area, on a bench, across from the bathroom. Sitting across from the bathroom was a strategic choice, because everybody has to go at some point. There's always someone passing by who can say, "Oh, yeah! I wanted to ask you this." This has also helped reduce emails. Instead of four or five email exchanges, people can sit next to me and have a discussion.”

**13. No gap between statement and fact:**

I remember one of the leaders I worked with always used to tell the team "please do not create information - I expect my team to only state facts and help me making decisions”. And he also used to follow the principle seriously. Gradually everyone made it a habit of coming straight to the point. Clear and crisp communication on the most critical points help the teams to increase efficiency, increase energy by reducing clutter.

**14. Don’t stick it in their ear**

Don’t tell people what to do, tell stories. Help guide them to the best decisions for them. Leaders discuss problems in the form of stories and not as a task. The people often come up with the solutions. Leaders who keep on continuously instructing people can actually be a put off for many smart people.

As Steve Jobs once said “It doesn't make sense to hire smart people and tell them what to do; we hire smart people so they can tell us what to do.” The smartest leaders have the uncanny ability to hire people who are much smarter than they are, who will push them through diverse thinking and drive their business forward.

**15. Be the evangelist for courage**

 Believe In people more than they believe in themselves and push them to be more courageous. Sometimes even brilliant people  gets entangled in the web of organisational complexity and not so bright corners of human psychology. A leader untangles the knots for them and Encourage them to challenge the status quo, and motivate them to achieve great things.

**16. Full identity front and center**

People are most effective when they can be completely themselves and bring their full identity to work. Give them the freedom they deserve and get out of their way. Every individual has a distinct style that bring to work. Great leaders simply let the People be themselves.

**17. Team first**

Team is paramount, so the most important things to look for in people is a team-first attitude. The whole is always bigger than the sums. A team-based attitude will always have bigger wins as an organisation is a big team. The pull of a team also helps everyone give their best shot.

I have broken the article to two parts as I want to put the first part quickly while I write the second part. The second part of the article is full of quite interesting leadership wisdoms. I hope you have enjoyed it.