

That's what individuals need in a leader, they need a unifier and someone who believes in each individual contribution. Trust is required in order to achieve this kind of respect and unity – that is ultimately up to the leader to create that environment.

TURN THE SPOTLIGHT TO OTHERS

One critical way of doing this is helping their people excel and look good; when they do so, the spotlight eventually will shine on themselves. Simon Sinek who gave one of the most popular TED talks to date on the subject of getting to the “why” of our actions, has since explored this notion of leaders seeing to the needs of others before themselves. In his most recent book, *Leaders Eat Last* he touches on the military mindset of “officers eat last” – the idea that leaders are willing to forgo their immediate needs in the interest of others. When your team sees your commitment to them, their commitment to you is met, which increases engagement and overall performance.

This is where improv so perfectly prepares an individual to lead: it is built on the very ideas of team, give and take, adaptation, vision, and the willingness to accept risks associated with certain decisions. Imagine yourself participating in an improv sketch with a few other individuals. Your overall success requires the collective efforts and individual victories of everyone involved. And so it is with leaders in the business world.

EVERYTHING CAN ALWAYS COME BACK TO IMPROV...

And here's why: being a selfless leader who is able to earn the respect and cooperation from a team of completely different individuals, requires a certain emotional maturity and strength. I sometimes see a dismissive look in people's eyes when I mention the word “improv,” as if to say, “What are you trying to sell me here?” They soon learn that improvisation involves a lot more than comedy. Leaders must respect, trust, support, listen, focus, and adapt. They need that “yes, and...” attitude. In building the team, you must encourage colleagues to regard one another in the way that the coach pointed out so poignantly in *Remember the Titans*.

In today's business climate, successful leaders must be able to accomplish the following:

- Communicate their vision and their ideas, while adapting to the changing business landscape
- Be able to move forward even within an arena of uncertainty
- Process information quickly all while being creative, innovative, and willing to see different perspectives
- Strive to make their teammates look good
- Think on their feet and adapt to changing situations
- Listen to understand, not just to respond

Each and every one of these can be accomplished by practicing improvisation. Once you understand that, the effect is transformative. Improv can be funny, but it works in situations that aren't very fun at all, regarding matters that could flare into confrontation if handled the wrong way. If you apply these principles, you promote healing and growth instead.