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## REAL LIFE LEADERSHIP: Practice is the best way to develop leadership skills

Local News

Black Mountain

By Ed Brenegar  
SPECIAL TO THE CITIZEN-TIMES  
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Haywood County

What do you do when you come across a compelling, inspiring idea in a book or magazine article? Do you have a method for translating ideas into action?

School News

State News

Think about the last professional development book you read. A friend recommends a book you just have to read. You buy it. Read it. You get inspired. It really does answer a lot of questions. You share your new insights with friends and colleagues.

Obituaries

Sports

Then within two weeks, the impact of the book is gone. Why? Because most books, even the most practical ones, are about ideas, not about practice.

Opinion

The philosopher Aristotle 2,300 years ago saw that we grow into our success. As an artist learns how to use the tools of her craft, leaders develop the same way. We don't quickly move from an idea to the successful application of that idea. We have to figure out the application through practice, through trial and error.

Forums

Nat'l/World News

Here's the problem. You are a smart person. You would not be the leader of your organization if you weren't. You read books on leadership and management. You attend conferences. You stay up-to-date on trends in your industry. And as a result, you have become very comfortable with the language of leadership and management. The problem is, we know more than we have experienced or have practiced.

WNC Health

Ideas are important for helping us focus, clarify, motivate and articulate our perspective.

Entertainment

cars.com

But knowing an idea conceptually, even visualizing how it might work, is not the same as having tested it to see if it does.

Jobs

Most leaders collect new ideas all the time but never give them the opportunity to see if they work.

Real Estate

Let me ask you this: In the past six months, how many books have you started?

Classifieds

Can you name one idea in any of them that has become incorporated into your leadership style or business practice? One idea that has become second nature to you?

Living

Good ideas are curiosities. Great ideas create impact. Impact is the record of change. So, if you want an idea to affect your ability to lead, you have to learn to apply it.

eTechnology

Customer Service

- Focus on learning more about the idea. Look for other books and articles. Search the Internet for organizations that have applied this idea. Ask questions about the impact of the idea. Learn from

### Newsroom

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others.

**Shopping**

- Identify the change you think the idea will bring.If you can see the difference that is made, you can see how the idea gets translated into action.

**Special Reports**

- Be patient and persistent in testing the idea.Stop looking for the next great idea. Focus on learning how to apply this idea. Create opportunities within your organization for exploration and discussion.

**Sponsored Sections**

- Start a weblog to chronicle what you are learning.Articulate your application for others. You'll gain greater depth of understanding of the importance of the idea.

**Mtn. Travel Guide**

Great leaders learn how to take a great abstract idea and turn it into practical, concrete ways of enhancing the impact of their organization.

**Black Mtn. News**

Ed Brenegar is president of the Community of Leadership Institute. He writes the Leading Questions weblog for leaders at <http://edbrenegar.typepad.com/>.

**Haywood Co. News**

Through leadership training, coaching, and programs in organizational planning, Brenegar inspires leaders to excellence in planning, partnership building, and personal achievement. You can reach him at [ed@edbrenegar.com](mailto:ed@edbrenegar.com).

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