

WHAT IS YOUR LEADERSHIP CREDO?



by Katie Anderson | *KBJ Anderson Consulting / Integrand LLC*

If you were to write down the 10 most important principles that you live by, what would they be?

This is your credo.

In this article I share the importance of intention — identifying your purpose and values, and aligning your actions in that direction — and how, when you write a personal or leadership credo, you document how you will lead and live with intention.

Writing your leadership or personal credo defines, as a recent client remarked to me, “the blueprint for the culture that you want to create.”

Creating a credo documents the actions and behaviors that align with the leader you want to be.

And it makes it explicit to the people around you of the culture you collectively can create.

Your credo makes the invisible visible.

Leading with intention: Defining the actions that align with your purpose

In Japanese, the word for *intention* — *shiko* — is

written by combining two kanji characters: the lower component of the first character represents the symbol for heart (or purpose) and the other represents the symbol for direction (or compass).

I discovered this while living in Japan in 2015. When we arrived in Tokyo, I realized that I needed business cards and, in lieu of a business logo, had the Japanese word for *intention* inscribed on my cards. Japanese speakers shared that *shiko* is a powerful word in Japanese and explained the meaning behind the symbols.

Since then, I’ve come to view intention as how you connect with your heart — your purpose — and how you align your actions in that direction.

This connection of purpose with taking action is how you live and lead with intention.

Intention versus Goals

People often use the words “intentions” and “goals” interchangeably, but they have subtly different meanings.

Intention is connected with the heart.”

Intentions are connected with what is important inside of us. Your heart, your values, your purpose. Intentions are lived each day — they are an expression of who you are as a person — and are often about your relationships with yourself and others. Intention is how you align your actions with your purpose and how you orient yourself in direction of who you want to be.

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Setting an intention is about defining who you want to be — what is most important inside your heart, your values, your innermost desires, your purpose — and determining the actions you need to take towards embodying this vision of yourself.

Intentions can be set in the moment, at the micro-level, or more broadly for your life, on the macro-level

Goals are connected with the mind.

Conversely, goals are more tangible and externally visible. Goals have a destination, a more clearly defined endpoint, or measurable achievement. Goals are usually determined through reasoning, logic, and analysis using our minds. Goals tend to be external achievements, even if they are personal ones.

Setting a goal is about defining a clear outcome and creating a plan of how to get there.

Goals are what you use to make improvements in personal, operational, or strategic problems. They are part of Plan-Do-Check-Act or Plan-Do-Study-Adjust (or as I like to call them Study-Adjust-Plan-Do) cycles.

You set a target, seek to understand the actual condition, and then analyze the causes of the gap between where you are today and where you want to be (your goal). You can then set an action plan for how to get there and experiment your way (though failure and learning) until you succeed.

The relationship between intentions and goals.

Intention represents who you want to be and the actions that embody that vision. Goals are what you want to achieve. Your intention is the why — your purpose — whereas goals are what you want to achieve and how you will achieve it.

Intentions along with measurable goals and targets are both important to improving yourself, your team, and your organization.

Creating a credo is a way to make the invisible visible.

Your credo defines who you want to be and how you plan to show up each and every day to be that person. It defines how you will align your actions with your purpose.

Ask yourself:

- What are the principles that you value the most?
- What is your purpose?
- How do you endeavor to show up to be that person?
- And how are you clearly communicating those values and actions to the people around you as well?

By putting your thoughts down on paper (or on your computer), you codify who you want to be and how you want to show up.

Your credo can serve as a guide for the culture you want to create.

It makes explicit the actions that you intend to take to be the leader you aspire to be each and every day.

“*Setting a goal is about defining a clear outcome and creating a plan of how to get there.*”

Leadership Credo Examples

In the book *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn*, I write about how Toyota leader Isao Yoshino crafted his leadership credo when he was transitioning to a new senior management role in Japan, after living in the United States for four years:

Inspired by [Toyota senior executive] Mr. Masao Nemo-

toto's 10-point leadership credo published in the early 1980s and [first Shogun of Japan] Tokugawa's precepts from the 1600s, Yoshino sat down with pen and paper to set out 10 leadership principles that he led and learned by. He wanted to make his expectations clear to his team — both about what to expect from him and what he expected of them. He wrote it by hand and sent it by fax to the Nagoya office.

A month after starting his role as Manager of the Nagoya Office, he revised the document into "Yoshino's '10 Principles' as Manager of the Nagoya Office" — a copy of which he found buried in his files as this book was in its final stages. In explaining to me the leadership principles that he documented as his credo nearly 30 years ago, Yoshino exclaims: "They still work!" And I can see why; the principles are timeless, thoughtful, strategic, and people-centered.

On the next page is a copy of Mr. Yoshino's handwritten credo and the translation he provided to me to include in *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn*.

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Isao Yoshino's Leadership Credo - 1991



 KATIE ANDERSON
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1. Take a long-term perspective and have foresight.
2. Look at your own job from a company-wide view.
3. Always carry a questioning mind and sense of curiosity.
4. Try to see through the true nature of things.
5. Practice *genchi-genbutsu-shuqi* (go to *gemba*).
6. Be conscientious (keep your promises, be punctual) and humble (take someone else's view).
7. Communicate (talk to subordinates at least once a day). Listen to them carefully.
8. Give constructive criticism (a clue to kaizen).
9. Try to find out your subordinates' strong points, give praise, and develop them.
10. Stay cheerful (particularly when you are in trouble).

Reflect on Mr. Yoshino's 10 Principles as a Leader:

- How would you react if you received this information in a memo if one of Mr. Yoshino's new direct reports before even meeting your new boss in person?
- What elements of Yoshino's leadership credo resonate most with you?
- What would you add or change?

Katie Anderson's Leadership Credo

Inspired by the leadership credos of Mr. Yoshino and his mentor Mr. Nemoto during the course of writing the book and now teaching its core leadership principles to others, I decided it was time to create my own leadership credo.

While imperfect and likely to evolve as I share it and reflect, it is a start of what I define as my personal leadership credo.

I share it to perhaps inspire you too to get started!
Katie Anderson's 10 Principles

1. **Connect with your heart** and hold precious what it means to be human. Show kindness first.
2. **Assume positive intent. Challenge all other assumptions** by asking questions, going to see, and listening with an open mind and heart.
3. **Be purposeful and intentional in your actions.** Be explicit about what you are doing and thinking — make the invisible visible.
4. **Establish a clear direction** and learn your way towards clarity.
5. **Celebrate learning and the process**, not just the result. Be willing to hear and share "bad news", always with positive intent.
6. **Offer challenges and provide support.** Let others always know

that you are there to help based on what they need, not what you want to share.

7. **Pursue excellence, and embrace mistakes**, failures, and setbacks as a source for learning.

8. **Choose a positive mindset.** Find the good, even in challenging situations.

9. **Start with yourself** and model the behaviors you want to develop in others. Always keep learning. Reflect, study, learn. Study — adjust — plan — do. Seek and share wisdom.

10. **Live and lead with intention** by connecting with your purpose and aligning your actions, each and every day.

What is your leadership credo?

Today I challenge you too in getting started with drafting your leadership credo.

What are ten principles or actions that are most important to you as a leader?

How do you define the actions that align with the leader — and the person — you want to be?

Connect with your purpose and define the actions that orient you in that direction.

To get started, reflect on your purpose:

- Who do you want to be?
- What culture do you want to create?
- What lasting impact do you want to have?

Then reflect on what actions align with and demonstrate those qualities.

Start creating a list of the different actions that align with your values and the behaviors that you want to model for the people around you.

Don't worry about being perfect. Just get started! Together we can inspire each other and work to create a more intentional people-centered world.

Please share your draft leadership credo on social media and tag me (Katie Anderson) in it or use the hashtags **#leadershipcredo** and **#leadingtolearn**.

This article was created from excerpts from the [Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn Workbook: A Companion Guide to Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn](#), the book [Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn](#) (available in paperback, ebook, and soon in audiobook - released in July 2021), and articles by Katie Anderson ■

