

The D9 Leadership Blueprint



*Personal Leadership,
Ubuntu, and
Collective Impact*

By Eddie Francis

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by Eddie Francis with AI assistance

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Slidell, Louisiana

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WHY THE D9 LEADERSHIP BLUEPRINT?

There I was, a college chapter president in the 1990-1991 academic year after being initiated in the spring of 1989. Filled with confidence, I thought...no...I knew that I was ready to take on the challenge. And it wound up being a disaster.

I had the passion to lead, but I didn't have the know-how. I thought leadership meant my frat brothers would do as I said.

One night, my temper got the best of me. Feeling disrespected by some pushback from my brothers, we got into a terrible argument. It ended with my proclaiming that the chapter was nothing without me. Yep, I thought that I was that dude.

Clearly, I completely misunderstood both leadership and brotherhood. If I could talk to my 21-year-old self, here's what I would say this: **“Leadership isn't a title. It's a process that's about people.”**

From over 20 years of career experience and dedicating my academic research to better understanding leadership, I learned that my story was far from unique. Even D9 members who are seasoned professionals struggle to excel at the critical skill of leadership!

I wrote this ebook to focus on two vital aspects of leadership in fraternity and sorority life: self-awareness and relationships.

The D9 Leadership Blueprint: Personal Leadership, Ubuntu, and Collective Impact combines theory with practical experience so that you have a solid foundation to lead effectively in your chapter, on your campus, in your fraternity or sorority, and throughout your career.

Let's get your process started!

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Photo: Halima Leak Francis

YOUR INDUCTION

Congratulations and welcome to your process!!! You are part of one of the most recognized membership organizations worldwide and also part of one of the most successful global leadership networks.



In the Divine Nine (D9), we're known for our attention-grabbing calls, eye-popping apparel, parties to remember, and crowd-pleasing stepping and strolling. Our aura is real.

The legacy of the D9's collective impact goes deeper. Since the early 20th Century, our fraternities and sororities have been engines of self-actualization and social change.

But there are inconvenient truths.

While our mystique and the D9 legacy are impressive, effective leadership doesn't automatically come with a set of letters.

While titles are attractive and the rewards are fulfilling, the practice of leadership can be difficult and thankless. Being an effective leader takes a lot of work, and on-the-job training doesn't always serve you or your chapter well.

There's also a more pleasant reality. Leadership is a skill. That means you can learn it and apply it.

The goal of this ebook is to help you and your brothers or sorors better understand leadership and how it can be applied to both honor the legacy of those who came before you and learn practical information that can carry you for life.

You will learn the deep importance of personal leadership and how it contributes to effective leadership. You will also learn the principle of Ubuntu to deepen your brotherhood or sisterhood while strengthening both your chapter and your influence.

By focusing on those two critical elements, you will be able to take your leadership to another level!

UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP

There's no one-size-fits-all definition of leadership. One reason is people's diverse views of leadership based on their lived experiences.¹

For example, the way your soror leads as the captain of the women's basketball team is likely not the same as her chapter leadership. Or the way your chapter president communicates with his friends from the West Coast may not resonate with your mostly Midwest-born chapter.

Researchers Robert Lussier and Christopher Achua tell us that there are five key elements of leadership:

- People
- The leader-follower relationship
- Influence
- Organizational objectives
- Change²

One element to note is change. This is about working toward continuous improvement through follower input, updating processes, adjusting to external factors, and innovation.

Notice, also, that even when someone is assigned a leadership position, their leadership success or failure involves everyone, like a link in a chain, which we'll address later.

In the context of the D9 and building on Lussier and Achua's definition, leadership could be defined as:

A process where brothers or sorors in both leader and follower positions influence each other to advance the mission, ideals, and values of their fraternity or sorority through continuous improvement.

SELF-AWARENESS AND PERSONAL LEADERSHIP

Now that we've put leadership in a specific context, let's talk about where it all begins—*with you*.

It is said that self-awareness is the "leadership first commandment."³ The more self-aware we are, the more we can grow and develop, allowing us to have a positive impact on others.

So, here's the question. **How self-aware are you?** Take a minute to ask yourself Nine Self-Awareness Questions:

- *Who am I?*
- *What is my personal mission?*
- *What are my core values?*
- *What kind of future do I envision for myself?*
- *What are my strengths and weaknesses?*
- *Am I meeting my priorities as a college student?*
- *Why did I want to be a member of my fraternity or sorority?*
- *Do my mission, vision, and values align with my fraternity or sorority?*
- *How do my actions and behaviors affect the people around me?*

There are more questions that you can ask yourself, but these can help you think seriously about your commitments to yourself, school, and your fraternity or sorority.



Think of it this way: The more clarity you have about yourself, the more clarity you have about how you influence others. *This self-awareness practice is called personal leadership.*

Personal leadership gives you the foundation to help guide and influence your chapter, whether you hold an office or not.

This is why it's wise to advise those interested in joining your fraternity or sorority to reflect on who they are and also to be honest with themselves about their motivations *before* seeking membership.

Here's an important truth. Those who lack a sense of personal leadership run the risk of making decisions that conflict with the missions, ideals, and values of their fraternities or sororities.

Decisions that lack personal leadership lead to problems such as hazing, poor academic performance, and other actions and behaviors that defy the trust of your brothers, sorors, and the community we pledged to serve.

BEING A STRONG LINK IN A CHAIN

Committing to personal leadership reminds us that we in the D9 are charged to serve and charged to lead. Our strength as individuals is critical for organizational success **and** community impact.

This is why we liken ourselves to links in a chain. The stronger each link, the stronger the chain.

Whether you're a neophyte or a prophyte, here are ways you can be that strong link:

- *Model the respect you want to see from others.*
- *Speak up when something doesn't align with your values and especially with the values of your fraternity, sorority, college, or university.*
- *Mentor newer brothers or sorors with the legacy of your chapter and fraternity or sorority in mind.*
- *Contribute productive, mission-focused ideas and energy to your chapter.*
- *Represent your fraternity or sorority and the shoulders you stand on with pride and dignity in all settings.*



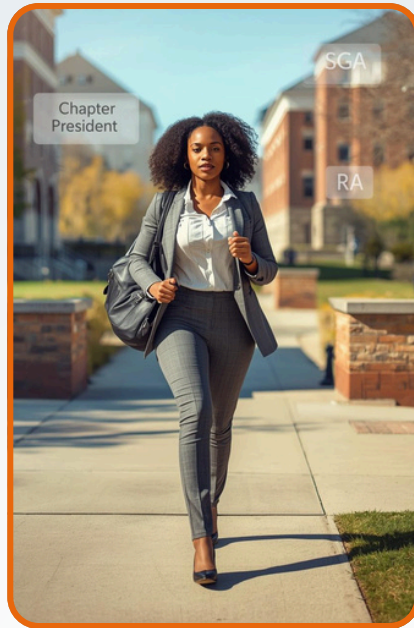
DRIVEN TO MAKE AN IMPACT

We now know that personal leadership can be a powerful force in supporting your organization's mission, ideals, and values. Personal leadership also drives accomplishment.

On campuses across the nation, D9 members are often known as active leaders who are driven to make an impact.⁴

It is not uncommon for D9 members to represent a tiny percentage of the overall campus population, yet hold a noticeable percentage of campus leadership positions.

There are brothers or sorors who may be chapter officers, student government association representatives, honor society members, and residential life coordinators. That sense of commitment continues throughout and after college.



Have you and your brothers or sorors ever shared stories about being up at 2 a.m., working on your academics and student leadership responsibilities while other campus peers may be sound asleep? Here's what may be driving you, among many things:

- **A Drive to Achieve:** Being highly motivated by accomplishment
- **Focus on Values:** Following your ethical and moral compass
- **Desire to Affect Change:** Our fraternities and sororities being rooted in social impact
- **Respect for Legacy:** Knowing that we stand on the shoulders of changemakers, both within and outside of the D9

Motivations such as these are the fuel for D9 members, and the collective desire to make an impact is what sets the D9 apart from our peers in fraternity and sorority life.

We must also be honest with ourselves that such a drive comes from a desperate need to boost our self-worth, which can threaten our sense of self-awareness. While accomplishments are important, they are not the only thing. Prioritize your mental, emotional, and physical health.