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My better self

Personal development is not easy. It often involves moving out of your comfort zone and doing something different. And because the activity is different, it is difficult. What's worse, to be of any lasting value, it must be repeated until it becomes a strength. For 2022, my resolution is to listen to a webinar once a month, and, twice in the year, to involve myself in some training.

The more you develop, the more you know; the more knowledge you have, the more you can help others; the way you help the people you work with (and for) will engender trust and respect. The idea of leadership through service to others is one that has pervaded my life.

In our engineering world, we might consider there to be two types of leadership: technical leadership and leadership in a technical environment. In an engineering environment, technical leadership comes in the form of leading technological change or demonstrating high standards in things like workmanship or engineering hygiene. Leadership in a technical environment is centred more on the delivery of an engineering output from a workforce; enthusing your people to be more innovative, engaging with your people so that they understand your vision and appreciate their importance in achieving excellence. These two styles are not exclusive to each other, but it is useful to consider which best suits your personal strengths so you can give your best to the team.

For all leaders, knowledge and trust bind teams. Without the knowledge to carry out the role, and the trust of the team, leadership becomes a line on a job spec rather than a demonstrable lifestyle. In fact, the role, rank or position often doesn't matter; when the chips are down, it is the characteristics of the individual that matters. From fitter to fellow, individual effort is the building block to success.

Quite often, career opportunities arise for only a fleeting moment; you have to be ready, and qualified, to step up and take the chance before they pass. In 2022, say 'yes' to one or two new things that take you out of your comfort zone – you never know where they might lead.

Adam Fraser-Hitchen
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