The 12 ordeals of leadership

The 12 Ordeals of Leadership describes twelve challenges that every leader faces. It sorts them into three groups of four.

WHAT AN ORDEAL IS

A challenge that changes how you lead

You meet the same ordeals more than once. Each one also changes how you see your role, and you have to work out your own response to it.

HOW THE ARENA AFFECTS AN ORDEAL

Some arenas make an ordeal harder

In P×E, the arena is the situation you work in. Two questions place it: how much a mistake costs, and how predictable the work is. The Summary Leadership program links each group of ordeals to one or two arenas.

Ordeals by fire

High-pressure challenges

Uncertainty
Make decisions and act while the situation is still unclear.

Decisions
Prepare before you decide. The preparation sets the quality, and a well-prepared fast decision can be a good one.

Failure
The response to a failure matters more than its size. Review the failure soon and apply what you learn.

Burnout
Plan hours, workload and recovery so that the pace can continue for months.

Linked arenas: **Crucible and Chaotic**

Ordeals by water

Trust and judgment challenges

Empathy
Learn the other person's point of view before you try to influence them.

Trust
Trust comes from consistent actions over time. Be open with people and it grows faster.

Communication
Measure communication by what the other person understood. Build rapport before you give the details.

Ethics
Large ethical failures start with small ones that people did not notice. What an organization rewards changes behavior more than what it says it values.

Linked arena: **Clouded**

Ordeals by combat

Challenges that involve opposition

Politics
Every organization has politics. Take part, so you can influence the decisions that affect your team.

Conflict
Find the interest and the need behind each person's position. Look for a solution that meets those needs.

Delegation
Delegate to build other people's skill, so that the team can do more work.

Balance
Some pairs of goals conflict, and you need both. Shift your attention between them as your work changes.

Linked arenas: **Cultivated and Crucible**

THE TENTH LAW OF EACH ORDEAL

If you handle an ordeal well, in the right arena, it develops you. If you handle it badly, it sets you back.

1. Pick one ordeal
Choose the one that affects you most now. Work on one at a time.

2. Find your arena
Answer the two arena questions above for the role you have now.

3. Plan one change
Choose one behavior to change, a date to review it, and a sign that it is not working.

P×E supports reflection and development. It is not a validated hiring, promotion, or performance-prediction tool.

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Which ordeal is your new supervisor facing? Talk it through on a 30-minute call.

Book a call

calendly.com/summaryleadership/30min