

Leaders & Success

Take Steps To Become The Best You



BY [MICHAEL MINK](#), FOR INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY

02:41 PM ET

To best lead and influence, first be clear on who you are and what you stand for. That suggestion

comes from Harry Kraemer, author of "Becoming the Best" and the former CEO of **Baxter International** (NYSE:[BAX](#)), a multibillion-dollar medical-products firm. He's now an executive at Madison Dearborn Partners, a private equity firm.

Tips on becoming your best self:

- **Take stock.** Kraemer believes that self-reflection is crucial and best done at the end of the day.

He suggests asking yourself:

"Did I act in a self-reflective manner, or did I get caught up in the emotions and the urgency of the day? Did I do what I said I was going to do — and if not, why not? Did I fall short of expectations? How did I treat people, lead people and follow people? If I had the day to live over again, what would I do differently?"

He noted: "The more self-reflective I am, the better equipped I am to become my best self every day."

- **Pursue balance.** See all sides to gain better perspective and improve decisions. "You don't just rely on what you think or what you know; you purposefully seek a broader perspective by engaging others," Kraemer told IBD.

He added that as a leader, "you recognize that you have a moral responsibility to develop every person on the team to their fullest potential. Feedback for each team member is not given once a year on an HR form. It's continuous feedback through open, honest conversation so that each person understands strengths and areas that need to be developed."

- **Lock on objectives.** Pick one or two at a time, suggests Joel Fotinos, a publisher and the author of "My Life Contract." He says that having too many objectives at a time means that we can spend only a small amount of time on each.

- **Strive for consistency.** When you're haphazard in effort, you probably won't see much movement toward major objectives. "Daily positive actions will create more positive results," Fotinos said. He compares it to going to the gym regularly. "You'll not only see results more quickly, but seeing the results will propel you further."

- **Exercise modesty.** It helps to believe everyone deserves respect.

"No matter what your title is now, genuine humility also reminds you where you came from," Kraemer said. He often asks senior leaders to recall when they were junior people in a cubicle. "Back then, there were people who reached out and made them feel part of the organization. Having experienced that, they vowed that if they ever became the boss or a leader, they would act the same way."

Now, they often realize that they haven't fulfilled that promise because they forgot where they came from, he says. "'Remember the cube' is my mantra for genuine humility," he added. "It shifts the focus to others, helps me see where I can lend a hand and reminds me to always put the spotlight on the team and their contributions."

- **Act.** Stop waiting for permission. "Sometimes we wait until a boss, a parent, a spouse or someone else gives us an indication that it's time to move forward," Fotinos said. "But we can waste a lot of time waiting for this external permission when, really, we can move forward at any time ... so why not now?"