

Leadership Expert: Wise Leaders Must Learn to Balance Chaos and Control

Dr. Mark Rutland knows about leadership. And this means he also knows about people. As the former president of two universities and a *New York Times*' bestselling author, he now teaches others how to lead with faith and wisdom.

"Every one of us has a tendency inside of us, a genetic tendency almost like the color of your eyes or the color of your hair, which predisposes us toward chaos or control," Rutland says on *The Leaders Notebook* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network. "Chaos is where all the creativity happens, all the molecular fighting and going and exciting ideas. That's where your salespeople are; they're coming up with new ideas, creativity, high energy, molecular energy.

"On the control side, that's where all your folks like accounting and legal are ... that's the reason that you have a high-octane salesman who sells 500 units a month, but everybody in accounting hates him, because they say he never turns his expense account in on time, or he gets addresses wrong on his on his sales orders," Rutland says. Leaders, he says, must "preside over the tension between chaos and control. You're like Ben Hur up in the chariot, and you've got these horses that are all wanting to run. But the problem is, they may not all be wanting to run at the same speed or in the same direction. And you have to get control of them and keep them together.

"So you have to say to the to the control people, 'Look, I know this salesman is a pain in the neck sometimes. And he's high chaos and causes a lot of problems, but he's selling 500 units a month, and you're not selling anything,' Rutland says.

“So at some point you have to say to them, ‘Calm down; put up with him; deal with it. Your job is to bring order out of the chaos.’

“Then at some point, you may have to say, ‘This chaos is not worth it to me. I’d rather hire two salesmen who will sell 250 units each and turn their expense accounts in on time [and get] their receipts in,” Rutland explains. “So the problem is that you move on this chaos-control continuum as the leader and you’re trying to make the decision of when do I tighten down? When do I move more toward control? And when do I loosen up and move more toward chaos?”

To hear more of Rutland’s wisdom on leadership in the chaos-control continuum, [click here](#) to listen to the entire podcast.
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