LEADERSHIP

Leadership is not just the job of one member of your group: it is the responsibility of the group as a whole!

Bottom line: Your group may have a chair or a president, but s/he cannot be effective without the help and cooperation of everyone involved.

What does a leader do?
- Sets an example for others to follow in word and action
- Introduces new ideas to the group
- Helps solve problems and settle differences
- Organizes the group in order to accomplish group goals

What makes a good leader?
There are as many answers to this as there are people to ask! A few qualities of an *effective* leader are:

- Good communication skills:
  You must be able to get your message across in writing and while speaking.

- Good listening skills:
  Make yourself approachable and be willing to listen to the members of your group.

- Involve everyone:
  No one likes to be left out. Everyone has a voice, a valuable opinion, and ability to contribute to the group process.

- Ability to solve problems:
  Know how to compromise and cooperate with your group members.

- Ability to make decisions:
  Be fair in balancing your wishes and judgment with those of your group.

- Give encouragement:
  Like you, your members need positive reinforcement and encouragement along the way.

Ultimately it is up to the leader to take responsibility for the group's process and progress!

- Seek help and information:
  Your group is a valuable source of information and ideas. Don't forget to use them often.

- Make things happen:
  If you don't take the initiative, neither will your group.

- Be decisive:
  Have the confidence to make tough decisions.

- Be energetic and enthusiastic:
  Energy and enthusiasm are contagious: share them both!

- Offer help and information:
  A give-and-take relationship is necessary for a group to function effectively.

Be committed! Be actively involved!

You cannot be a good leader without the help and cooperation of your group!

Top 10 Qualities That Make a Great Leader

Honesty

Whatever ethical plane you hold yourself to, when you are responsible for a team of people, it's important to raise the bar even higher. Your team is a reflection of yourself, and if you make honest and ethical behavior a key value, your team will follow suit.

Ability to Delegate

Finessing your vision is essential to leading an organized and efficient project, but if you don't learn to trust your team with that vision, you might never progress to the next stage. It's important to remember that trusting your team with your idea is a sign of strength, not weakness. Delegating tasks to the appropriate people is one of the most important skills you can develop.

The key to delegation is identifying the strengths of your team and capitalizing on them. Find out what each team member enjoys doing most. Chances are if they find that task more enjoyable, they will likely put more thought and effort behind it. This will not only prove to your team that you trust and believe in them, but will also free up your time to focus on the higher level tasks that should not be delegated. It's a fine balance, but one that will have a huge impact on productivity.

Communication

Knowing what you want accomplished may seem clear in your head, but if you try to explain it to someone else and are met with a blank expression, you know there's a problem. If this has been your experience, then you may want to focus on honing your communication skills. Being able to clearly and succinctly describe what you want done is extremely important. If you can't relate your vision to your team, you won't all be working towards the same goal.

Sense of Humor

If your funding isn't what you thought it was, your event hits a big bump in the road, or you accidentally skip an important step in your planning process (like ordering lunch), guiding your team through the process without panicking is as challenging as it is important. Morale is linked to productivity, and it's your job as the team leader to instill a positive energy. That's where your sense of humor will finally pay off. Encourage your team to laugh at the mistakes instead of crying. If you're constantly learning to find the humor in the struggles, your work environment will become a happy and healthy space your team looks forward to working in, rather than dreading it.

Confidence

There may be days where the future of your program is worrisome, and things aren't going according to plan. This is true with any project, large or small: the most important thing is not to panic. Part of your job as a leader is to put out fires and maintain the team morale. Keep up your confidence level, and assure everyone that setbacks are natural and the important thing is to focus on the larger goal. As the leader, by staying calm and confident, you will help keep the team feeling the same. Remember, your team will take cues from you, so if you exude a level of calm damage control, your team will pick up on that feeling. The key objective is to keep everyone working and moving ahead.

Commitment

If you expect your team to work hard and produce quality content, you've got to lead by example. There is no greater motivation than seeing the team leader down in the trenches working alongside everyone else, showing that hard work is being done on every level. By proving your commitment, you will not only earn the respect of your team, but will also instill that same hardworking energy among them. You want to create a reputation for not just working hard, but also be known as a fair leader. Once you have gained the respect of your team, they are more likely to deliver the peak amount of quality work possible.

Positive Attitude

You want to keep your team motivated towards the continued success of the project, and keep energy levels up. Remember that everyone on your team is a human being, with dreams, goals, emotions and problems of their own. Keep the mood a fine balance between productivity and playfulness.

Creativity

Some decisions will not always be so clear-cut. You may be forced at times to deviate from your set course and make an on-the-fly decision. This is where your creativity will prove vital. It is during these critical situations that your team will look to you for guidance, and you may be forced to make a quick decision. As a leader, it's important to learn to think outside the box and to choose which of two bad choices is the best option. Don't immediately choose the first or easiest possibility: sometimes it's best to give these issues some thought, and even turn to your team for guidance. By utilizing all possible options before making a rash decision, you can typically reach the end conclusion you were aiming for.

Intuition

When leading a team through uncharted waters, there is no roadmap on what to do or where to go next. Everything is uncertain, and the higher the risk, the higher the pressure. That's where your natural intuition has to kick in. Guiding your team through the process of your day-to-day tasks can be honed down to a science. But when something unexpected occurs, or you are thrown into a new scenario, your team will look to you for guidance. Drawing on past experience is a good reflex, as is reaching out to your mentors for support. Eventually though, the tough decisions will be up to you to decide, and you will need to depend on your gut instinct for answers. Learning to trust yourself is as important as your team learning to trust you.

Ability to Inspire

Especially in the beginning stages of a new program or project, inspiring your team to visualize the successes to come is vital. Make your team feel invested in the accomplishments of the larger organization. Generating enthusiasm for the hard work you are all putting in is so important. Being able to inspire your team is great for focusing on future goals, but it's also important for the current issues. When you are all mired deep in work, morale is low, and energy levels are fading, recognize that everyone needs a break now and then. Acknowledge the work that everyone has dedicated, and commend the team on each of their efforts. It's your job to keep spirits up, and that begins with an appreciation for their hard work.

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15 Ways To Identify Bad Leaders

If you really want to determine someone's leadership ability, give them some responsibility, and see what they do with it. Leaders produce results. It's not always pretty, especially in the case of inexperienced leaders, but good leaders will find a way to get the job done.

One of the primary responsibilities of leadership is to create more and better leaders. I believe it was John Maxwell who said, "There is no success without a successor."

It's important to realize that just because someone is in a leadership position doesn't necessarily mean they should be. Put another way, not all leaders are created equal.

Poor Character
A leader who lacks character or integrity will not endure the test of time. It doesn't matter how intelligent, affable, persuasive, or savvy a person is, if they are prone to rationalizing unethical behavior based upon current or future needs, they will eventually fall prey to their own undoing.

Lack of Performance
Nobody is perfect, but leaders who consistently fail are not leaders, no matter how much you wish they were. While past performance is not always a certain indicator of future events, a long-term track record of success should not be taken lightly.

Poor Communication Skills
Great leaders can communicate effectively across mediums, constituencies, and environments. They are active listeners, fluid thinkers, and know when to dial it up, down, or off.

Self-Serving Nature
If a leader doesn't understand the concept of "service above self," they will not engender the trust, confidence, and loyalty of those they lead. Any leader is only as good as his or her team's desire to be led by them. An overabundance of ego, pride, and arrogance are not positive leadership traits.

One-Size-Fits-All Leadership Style
Great leaders are fluid and flexible in their approach. They understand the power of--and necessity for--contextual leadership. "My way or the highway" leadership styles don't play well in today's world, will result in a fractured culture, and ultimately a non-productive organization. Only

those leaders who can quickly recognize and adapt their methods to the situation at hand will be successful over the long haul.

Lack of Focus and Follow-Through

Those leaders who lack the focus and attention to detail needed to apply leverage and resources in an aggressive and committed fashion will perish. Leaders who do not possess a bias toward action, or who cannot deliver on their obligations will not be successful. Leadership is about performance: intentions must be aligned with results for leaders to be effective.

Not Forward-Looking

No vision = no leadership. Leaders satisfied with the status quo, or who tend to be more concerned about survival than growth, won't do well over the long run. The best leaders are focused on leading change and innovation to keep their organizations fresh, dynamic and growing. Bottom line: leaders who build a static organization doom themselves to failure.

Disconnected from the Market

Leaders not attuned to the needs of today's society will fail. As the old saying goes: if you're not taking care of your customers, someone else will be more than happy to. Successful leaders focus on customer satisfaction and loyalty. They find ways to consistently engage them and incorporate them into their innovation and planning initiatives. If you ignore, mistreat, or otherwise don't value your customer base, your days as a leader are most certainly numbered.

Not Invested

Leaders are fully committed to investing in those they lead. They support their team, build into their team, mentor and coach their team, and they truly care for their team. A leader not fully invested in their team won't have a team — or at least not an effective one.

Not Accountable

Real leaders are accountable. They don't blame others, don't claim credit for the success of their team, but always accept responsibility for failures that occur on their watch. Most of all, leaders are accountable to their team. Leaders not accountable to their people will eventually be held accountable by their people.

Not Focused

Leaders who are not intentional or focused will fail themselves and their team. Leaders who lack discipline will model the wrong behaviors and will inevitably spread themselves too thin. Organizations are at the greatest risk when leaders lose their focus.

Lacking Vision

Poor vision, tunnel vision, or vision that is fickle or non-existent will cause leaders to fail. A leader's job is to align the organization around a clear and achievable vision. This cannot occur when the blind lead the blind.

The moral of this story is leaders need to be honest, have a demonstrated track record of success, be excellent communicators, place an emphasis on serving those they lead, be fluid in approach, have laser focus and a bias toward action. If these traits are not possessed by your current leadership team, or your up-and-coming leaders, you'll be in for a rocky road ahead.

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