

TEN LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

by Danny Cox

No organization can rise above the quality of its leadership. Because leadership is a position that must be earned day in and day out, there are important personal choices that both new and experienced leaders must make on a regular basis. Effective leaders are first and foremost effective people. Personal ethics can't be separated from professional ethics. Therefore, the character of the leader is essential. The following list of ten characteristics is a valuable guide for quality living in addition to being critical criteria for leadership.

1. **A HIGH STANDARD OF PERSONAL ETHICS** leads the list. Honest Abe Lincoln, who walked miles to return a customer's change, is a classic example of how personal ethics are reflected in professional conduct. Decisions made under pressure and/or temptation separate the great ones from the impostors.
2. **HIGH ENERGY.** Great leaders are not exhausted by dealing with petty issues. These people know right from wrong as well as the difference between what's truly important and what's merely interesting.
3. The ability to **WORK PRIORITIES** shares equal importance with setting priorities. Many brilliant priority lists end up in the landfill of life. The difference between setting priorities and working them through is the difference between a dreamer and a doer.
4. **COURAGE.** The willingness to take risks and accept responsibility for the outcome is a consistent quality among effective leaders. Either you or your fears will control everything you do. An organization will be no bolder than the leader.
5. **COMMITTED AND DEDICATED HARD-WORKING** leaders will eventually develop dedicated and hard working organizations regardless of who they start with or the experience they bring to the job.
6. **UNORTHODOX LEADERS** have an urge to create and don't have the patience to wait for a phone to ring before acting. Effective leaders are innovators who bore easily and prefer shaping tomorrow to repeating yesterday.
7. Great leaders have the **GOAL ORIENTATION** to make tough decisions. Goal orientation produces a drive and energy that shield us from the pain of the task. Keeping an organization focused increases efficiency.
8. **INSPIRED ENTHUSIASM** is like the pilot light on the oven. Genuine enthusiasm is contagious. People look to their leaders for enthusiasm. The inspiration level of the organization is directly proportionate to the enthusiasm of the leader -- be it high or low.

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9. LEVEL-HEADED PEOPLE make realistic leaders who respond to problems rather than simply react. A leader who can stay cool under pressure inspires confidence among those in the organization and empowers them to do the same.

10. The DESIRE TO HELP OTHERS succeed is the mark of a truly great leader. Synergy is created when a leader truly invests his or her efforts in the success of others. Zig Ziglar says it like this, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care about them."

Whether you're trying to increase your own effectiveness as a leader or are trying to develop leadership talent within your characteristics of those you consider to be great leaders.

Remember that leadership is an art, not a science and the difference between a genuinely effective leader and a short-term motivator can be found in the personal decisions an individual makes when choosing how to live his or her life. Long-term commitment to the principles described above will produce an effective leader and, over time, an inspired organization.

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