

Skills

(Leadership Skills, SMART Goals, and Emotional Intelligence)

CSC 424 Software Design

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Leadership, defined as the ability to organize other people to reach a shared goal, is one of those soft skills that employers search for when reviewing resumes regardless of the job being applied for. There are a wide array of skills associated with the term leadership, each playing its own crucial part in being able to operate either as head of a team or within a team. As head of a team, leaders are often taken with achieving a certain level of success with a group of individuals all working together. Within the group itself, leadership can appear in the form of an individual taking charge or inspiring others to work at an improved rate or quality.

While there are several skills associated with the term leadership, not all skills are created equally. As per indeed.com, the top six skills involved in crafting a good leader are decisiveness, integrity, team building, problem solving, dependability, and the ability to mentor. A decisive leader is one who is capable of making good decisions based on the information they have all while thinking critically of solutions and setting achievable goals. Integrity is a key portion of successful leadership as it ensures that the decisions being made are made with good morals backing them. Honesty and a strong set of values allow an individual to maintain a positive image and sets a strong, positive message to the team as a whole. A leader is nothing without their team, so constructing a rock-solid team fluent in communication, integrity, and work ethic. Being able to build a team from the ground up that operates fluidly is an impressive show from a leader. However, no matter how fluid the team being built is, problems do arise, and typically it's up to the leader to solve them. Problem-solving is another crucial element in forging a good leader, as they must be able to think critically and quickly to solve problems effectively. Dependability is also an incredibly essential trait for a leader to have. Being dependable allows for not only your team, but anyone you work with to build trust in you. This allows for you to achieve buy in with your associates which leads to higher productivity. Finally, after you achieve all of these traits, a leader must be able to teach and mentor their associates in order to provide growth and craft more leaders in the future and excel organization scales.

When discussing leadership, there are ten common, different styles that one could focus on or mix together. These styles are as follows: coach, visionary, servant, autocratic, laissez-faire, democratic, transformational, transactional, bureaucratic, and pacesetter. Each of these styles provide their own lists of pros and cons when implemented into the workplace and even more of an impact when mixed with one another. These practices range anywhere from completely hands off to highly involved depending on which method is chosen.

Good leaders don't simply stick with a single leadership style, they often change and merge multiple styles to achieve varying levels of success. The final, and possibly the most important piece of being a leader is the ability to advance your own leadership skills and further develop your own techniques and methods. [1]

A key element in being a successful leader is the ability to understand, use, and manage not only your emotions but those around you. The ability to defuse situations, avoid conflict, and inspire others to overcome challenges, can prove very useful to one leading a group of people. Managing emotions in this manner is referred to as a person's emotional intelligence, also known as emotional quotient or EQ. Emotions dictate every aspect of life, in both social situations and in solitude.

Emotional intelligence can affect multiple facets of one's life including performance at school or work, physical health, mental health, and relationships held with other people. Maintaining your own emotions is crucial to maintaining a healthy environment internally and externally and there are several methods of building emotional intelligence. There are four main attributes associated with emotional intelligence:

- Self-management
 - Being able to control your own emotions and behaviors, self-management allows one to take initiative, adapt to ever changing circumstances, and follow through with commitments.
- Self-awareness
 - Recognizing exactly which emotions are impacting your psyche can help with identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as promote confidence.
- Social-awareness
 - Recognizing not only your own emotions but those around you as well allows you to pick up on social cues, recognize power dynamics amongst groups, and address other's concerns.
- Relationship-management
 - Being able to not only create new relationships, but maintain and promote growth within them involves communicating clearly, reading emotions effectively, and managing conflict and emotions in yourself and others.

Building emotional intelligence can benefit both socially and internally and there are several ways one can take to strengthening it. One of the most important things you could do to build EQ is to allow emotions to guide constructive decisions all while maintaining composure and keeping a level head. In the face of upsetting information, it can be rather difficult to maintain composure, but by building emotional intelligence, these tasks become easier to manage and overcome. Stress management becomes easier as well as the ability to read and interpret others' emotions and actions as a person's EQ increases, allowing for smoother social interactions and stable internal emotional control. Focusing on the moment and allowing emotions to run through your body as you become more familiar with the sensation can help improve internal emotional control, while maintaining full attention on individuals as they speak can help improve your ability to read others' emotions. By doing these two simple things, an individual's EQ can take a turn and begin improving over time. [3]

SMART goals, created in 1981 by George T. Doran, are simple tools designed to improve the odds of succeeding and accomplishing tasks. While working as a consultant for the Washington Water Power Company, Doran published a paper outlining the benefits and criteria of SMART goals called “There’s a SMART Way to Write Management’s Goals and Objectives.” The concept of these goals would later be included and utilized by many individuals, myself included, over the years to either allow an individual to improve their own performance or to lay out a clear cut path for others to follow. The SMART acronym stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

When setting a goal, being very **specific** is vital to being successful at accomplishing the task at hand. It is important to clearly lay out mission statements by answering the ‘w’ questions: who, what, where, when, which, and why. Each of these descriptors are essential in their own way and can shed light on certain paths that need to be taken to achieve the goal. **Who** allows one to lay out the exact individuals that need to be involved and **What** describes the task at hand in great detail. **When** provides a rough estimation of time required to complete the task as a whole, while **Where** is a situational condition related to the location of the objective. Finally, **which** is typically used to determine if a goal is realistic or not, as it outlines the requirements needed for success, and **why** serves as the main reason for setting this goal in the beginning.

In order to complete a task, making sure the task is **measurable** as a way to determine if the goal was met is crucial, otherwise, work towards it can seem stagnant and slowing. Setting milestones to hit along the way can drastically improve morale and sharpen focus on certain aspects of the project. Ensuring that the task is also **achievable** is also valuable as it allows you to lay out exactly what skills are needed to be developed to reach the end goal as well as serve as encouragement to those involved.

Relevant projects are those that are designed to serve a larger purpose for the business at hand. This ensures that at the end of it all, the time, energy, and possibly money spent was not for nothing. And finally, setting up a **time-bound** project is key to ensuring success, as it allows for the creating of time constraints. These constraints serve as a sense of urgency, constantly pushing progress and preventing cluelessness on where progress should be at a period in time.

When it comes to crafting a SMART goal, asking plenty of questions is vital to fine-tuning a strategy used to attack the task at hand and advantages can be earned through proper managing, planning, tracking, and automating. As someone who personally uses SMART goals, introduced to me by my current manager, simply laying out schematics on paper is a huge step in the right direction. When combined with the intricate details of SMART goals, tasks become simple to execute and execute properly. [2]

Works Cited

- [1] <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/leadership-skills>
- [2] <https://www.smartsheet.com/blog/essential-guide-writing-smart-goals>
- [3] <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/emotional-intelligence-eq.htm>