

Leadership Qualities

Good leaders possess self-awareness, garner credibility, focus on relationship-building, have a bias for action, exhibit humility, empower others, stay authentic, present themselves as constant and consistent, become role models and are fully present.

What is Leadership?

According to John Maxwell, 'Leadership is influence - nothing more, nothing less.'

Warren Bennis called it the capacity to translate vision into reality.

Here are the most important leadership qualities and skills to look for in a great leader.

1. Integrity

Integrity is a core quality that every leader must possess. You cannot run any business successfully if you lack integrity. Self-development author Brian Tracy says that whenever he holds a strategic business meeting, the first value every executive agrees on is integrity.

Business leaders know- Integrity is the foundation of good leadership, and one must stand for their beliefs. No matter how hard a situation, a good leader inspires with his principles without compromising; they refrain from making false promises or taking shortcuts, choosing thoughts and actions over personal gain. Delivering the said promises as ethically and morally grounded is necessary to pay the dividend in the long run.

2. Innovative

An innovative leader is not a creative genius with thought-provoking ideas but gives others the freedom to develop their ideas. You would always find people with great ideas who lack the will, determination, and fear of taking any action. But innovative leaders are not one of them.

Innovative people are always open to new ideas and discussions. They listen to everyone actively and also motivate others to think out of the box. This quality gives them an edge over others since they are always hunting for creativity and innovations. As the innovative leader, Steve Jobs himself said, 'Innovations distinguish between a leader and a follower.'

3. Honesty

One of the essential leadership qualities is the possession of honesty. Honesty is expected from leaders to garner trust and respect from people for reliability. Moreover, we look up to people who are loyal to their words and are accountable. Thus, honesty is the most valued trait for any business leader or any leader in general.

Leadership can be defined in one word 'Honesty'. You must be honest with the players and honest with yourself. ~Earl Weaver

4. Active Listening

The roots of effective leadership lie in simple things, one of which is listening. Listening to someone demonstrates respect; it shows that you value their ideas and are willing to hear them. ~John Baldoni

Active listening is an excellent quality to have when it comes to leadership. Good leaders listen to people with great attention and sincerity. It helps them understand people and their perspectives. Active listening builds trust and relationships in the long run. Good leaders communicate with care, and focus on the person and the message; they don't interrupt and acknowledge what is being said. And that is what the world needs; leaders who listen to their people. Acquiring this skill is not easy; it needs self-awareness and humility to respect others' thoughts.

5. Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is found abundantly among true leaders; hence they know about their competencies and leadership qualities. They are sure about their competencies and leadership skills. They have a sense of self-assurance and self-esteem and, most importantly, believe that they can make a difference. As Rosalynn Carter rightly said, 'You have to have confidence in your ability and be tough enough to follow through.'

Self-confidence is critical for leadership because it gives them wings to take risks, accomplish goals, and fly high. Organizational leaders take charge of themselves and march with positivity and confidence. It allows them to make immediate decisions, and solve organizational problems and conflicts. Good leaders take full responsibility and quick actions without passing on issues, ignoring, or procrastinating.

6. Visionary

A visionary leader is far-sighted and driven and inspired by what a company can become. Visionary leaders work hard for the greater good and keep themselves

updated with time and change. Ensuring a vision for the future with perseverance and keeping everybody invested in the process is what a visionary leader does.

A visionary leader does not hold back to take risks and unconventional decisions.

7. Strong Communicator

Excellent communication is the key to good leadership. An effective leader knows how to put across his message. They are good orators and communicate to get his/her work done. They are not harsh; they choose words and expressions which suit the situation and allow others to express their thoughts and ideas.

They understand how important it is to have good communication skills. They are very conscious and learn from others' behaviours, which gives them a deep understanding of human complexities.

8. Delegation

The ability to delegate effectively is a good leadership quality. A good leader who knows how to delegate wisely and make the best out of it. Delegation is crucial for maximizing productivity and team performance. Also, a leader is the busiest person in any organization. Therefore knowing when and how to delegate gives them more time for their most important work.

Also, an essential factor to note here is that the ability to delegate does not limit to delegating tasks to others. It also means having the awareness and understanding of who has the necessary skills and expertise to complete the task. Mindful delegation is vital to save time and future inconveniences.

9. Decision-making Skill

Good leaders are decisive and know how to help the organization, employees, stakeholders, and customers.

You would never envision a leader who is unclear and uncertain. Good leaders are aware of the fact of how their decisions can make or break businesses. They evaluate a given circumstance many a time before coming to any conclusion. They collect the necessary information required before making any announcements. Also, they do not believe in rumours but examine a situation or a problem themselves before making a decision.

10. Problem-Solving Skills

Leadership roles are not only limited to management or delegating. Today for any business leader, the spectrum of leadership responsibilities has evolved. For the proper functioning of an organization, leaders must have problem-solving skills

and an eye for analyzing the situation to make better decisions. When it comes to effective leadership, problem-solving skills are crucial.

Good leaders have this innate ability to respond to problems. They are equipped with the ability to identify and define problems. Make the analysis, use data, and communicate to solve the issues.

Cultivating strong problem-solving skills is vital for any leader to eliminate barriers.

11. Fair Attitude

We all have personal biases. One who can think and act beyond this loop is what makes them different from the crowd. These biases are one of the factors why most leaders fail to achieve greater heights.

Good leaders are fair to the employees and the organization's processes. They acknowledge the good and always make room for everyone to thrive together.

They understand that nothing significant has ever been achieved with an attitude that is unfair and biased. Even if it does, the sustainability of the outcome is always questionable.

Good leaders keep biases and unfairness out of the window and create a culture that does not promote or acknowledge this attitude.

12. Inquisitiveness

Have you ever watched great leaders sharing stories and their experiences in Ted-talks? I presume you have. If you haven't, I recommend you do it.

You would realize how knowledgeable and curious these leaders are. And how they are always open to learning new things. Their thoughts, ideas, and perceptions are unique and thought-provoking.

The reason behind this is their inquisitiveness and curiosity about life. They pursue various interests and keep themselves invested in them. They are open to broadening their spectrum through art, technology, and science. And, in fact, all the world's know-how.

This quality helps them build a rational and positive attitude towards any problems.

13. Self-motivated

One of the essential leadership traits of good leaders is their ability to motivate others. Good leaders always motivate their employees and boost their morale

when needed. They sail their boat smoothly, even in hazardous situations. They keep themselves self-motivated and set an example to follow.

14. Humility

Humble leaders make the best leaders. This statement is not something I am claiming to be true. In his seminal book 'Good to Great,' Jim Collins shows extensive research data on how humble and willful leaders help their companies grow and sustain their market position.

Humility is not the first trait that comes to mind when we think about leadership. But it is one of the essential qualities of a good leader. It is because humility often gets overshadowed by the flamboyance of celebrated leadership qualities.

Humble and willful leaders understand the fact that leadership is all about working for the greater good. They lead to transformation, not dominance. They are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and always yearn to learn and contribute more.

15. Care for Others

Good leaders understand the value of the balance between work and life. They know that people's health and wellness associated with the organization play an important role in attaining success.

They inspire their team members and make sure the staff, clients, beneficiaries, and customers feel trusted.

They understand the importance of appreciating and recognizing employees and creating mutual respect and understanding within the organization.

They work towards giving them an environment where everyone can flourish.

16. Self-Discipline

Good leadership is in developing discipline in others. Good leaders are self-disciplined and have good time management skills. They encourage a culture where people are disciplined. This is a quality to which people can adapt themselves with persistence. When you are self-disciplined and set an example, you motivate others to follow.

In an organization where everything is fast-paced, and employees get occupied with so much workload, being more disciplined can help achieve more and keep the work environment at ease.

17. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is the capability to identify, manage, evaluate, and understand our own emotions and the people around us.

According to psychologist, Daniel Goleman, EI has five components-

Self-awareness

Self-regulation

Empathy

Motivation and

Social skills

Good leaders are self-aware, act in control, and take calculated decisions without getting carried away. They understand others' perspectives without being cynical. They are self-motivated and have strong social skills, which help them build connections and healthy relationships.

These explain that good leaders have a high degree of Emotional Intelligence. This is why EI is one of the essential leadership attributes.

18. Passion

Passion is a common leadership trait found in most effective leaders across the world. They are highly passionate about their goals and objectives. They know what they want and work tirelessly to achieve those. Their passion is infectious and also very inspiring. They are highly committed to their goals and also help others in achieving theirs.

Passionate leaders elevate productivity and ensure that the employees commit to their vision. Passion helps leaders to instil motivation in their employees and helps to achieve the desired vision.

19. Resilience

One must understand their self before taking responsibility for others. Resilient leaders are perceptive and also know how to handle themselves in any good or bad situation.

Resilient leaders are capable of retaining their energy level under strain and responding to disruptive changes. They also overcome severe challenges without destructive behaviour or hurting others. Resilient leaders are high-performing leaders who recover from any adversity positively.

20. Accountability

Being an accountable leader is not an easy task. It means you can own up to commitments and promises you made. It means being answerable to the actions and decisions made by you and by those you lead. Accountable leaders establish clear goals and targets. They focus on the future and also own up to their mistakes. They ask for help when needed and provide honest and constructive feedback.

21. Supportive

Leadership without support is like trying to make bricks without enough straws. True leaders reinforce their ideas and plans with strategic partnerships, alliances, and supportive audiences. ~Reed Markham

Supportive leaders give the guidance that you need. Supportive leaders mentor you and guide you till you need little to no supervision in the future. They do not believe in delegating tasks and expecting results right away. They are with you in the process and support you with their knowledge and experiences. Supportive leadership involves building trust among the team members and encouraging dialogue to keep the team spirit high. The fundamentals of supportive leadership are, therefore, promoting teamwork, building relationships, and commitment.

22. Tech-savvy

For digital transformation, the world needs Tech-Savvy leaders. Today's leader needs to understand the technology sufficiently to sustain their business. The organization's technology decisions must be guided by a strategy and transforming its analogue experience into a digital one. The majority of companies worldwide are digital today, and it will only grow exponentially with time. Therefore, it becomes evident that business leaders enhance technological skills for sustainability and making better decisions.

Our future success is directly proportional to our ability to understand, adapt, and integrate new technology into our work. ~Sukant Ratnakar

23. Empathy

Empathy is a core leadership trait that helps you nurture your team. Empathy is in understanding others' needs and what goes into their mind. We live in a world with a constant communication loop, and people interact with each other with much ease. But at the same time, people are less empathetic towards each other. Many communicate to express themselves but not to understand others' perspectives.

Empathetic leaders are perceptive, and they are aware of others' feelings and thoughts. Being empathetic does not always mean agreeing with others' views, but appreciating and having the willingness to understand.

24. Learning Agility

Agile leaders make the best response to organizational change and uncertainty. Today we need leaders who are quicker in decision-making and who can take immediate action in crisis times. We live in a fast-paced world, and work trends are evolving in no time. Therefore there is little time for all to take calculated decisions. Also, the strategies and policies that worked well in the past can be obsolete today. One of the visible examples is the Covid-19 crisis. The crisis changed the landscape of work culture, and leaders had to find new strategies to fight the storm overnight.

The future of work will always be uncertain and ambiguous. Future events will bring new challenges. Organizations now will only thrive in the future under the supervision of leaders who can make sense of uncertainty.

25. Empowerment

Great leaders can empower their team members to achieve maximum productivity and organizational success.

Empowerment gives the team members equal decision-making opportunities and uses their power of judgment and expertise to develop solutions. This builds the sense of individual worth and also employees' commitment towards their organization. Every individual brings their skills and talents to the table that often finds a route to flow. Usually, you would have skilful team members, but lack of guidance and motivation fails to bring them the best.

It is, therefore, on leaders how they foster these skills by empowering them. Good leaders know how to unleash positive traits in others. They understand that the only way to do that is by empowering them. Therefore, leaders take it as a daily practice to continuously empower people and strengthen the team.

Ways to Develop Leadership Skills

Test, try, improve: Start with small actions or changes to test and try, and then ask a coworker or friend for feedback. Use the list of qualities of good leaders as a starting point by picking one or two things you want to work on – and then give it a try. For example, if you want to increase your self-awareness, try a new way of speaking or acting in a meeting, and then ask a coworker for their feedback and see how closely it matches your perception of what you were doing.

Develop a support network: Start with one or two people who can become your mentors or accountability partners. Mentors help us to think differently about how we act and perceive things that happen in the workplace. Accountability partners help us stay on track with the plans we have made. Think about someone you appreciate and ask them to be your mentor or accountability partner.

Build relationships: Effective leaders are relationship builders. Start small and expand your network over time. You might want to start by trying to speak with one or two colleagues each week that you don't typically speak with and take it from there. Soon you will have a wide network of relationships.

Learn more about good leadership: Take a course or an entire degree program. For example, if you are working on a bachelor's degree, consider adding an undergraduate concentration in leadership. If you have already completed a bachelor's degree, a graduate certificate in leadership or a full master's degree in organizational leadership would be an excellent next step.

References:

<https://www.snhu.edu/about-us/newsroom/business/qualities-of-a-good-leader#:~:text=Good%20leaders%20possess%20self%2Dawareness,models%20and%20are%20fully%20present.>

<https://www.adamenfroy.com/leadership-qualities>

<https://blog.vantagecircle.com/leadership-qualities/>

<https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/characteristics-good-leader/>