

LEADERSHIP

“Three” Attributes of effective leaders

If leadership is about moving a group from its current state to a desired future state, there needs to be an exciting vision for a better future. The ultimate objective is for the leader to intervene skillfully and deliver results by focusing on two dimensions – relationship and process.

The content we explore in this workshop is not designed to be an exhaustive list of attributes. They are a starting point; if you speak with educators, experts, and practitioners, you will likely hear attributes that have not been included. That is the wonderful thing about leadership – there is so much to learn, and each person you encounter will have a new perspective or insight. Ultimately, you can determine what makes the most sense for you.

Leadership, in many ways, is like beauty. It is in the eye of the beholder. Some view the President, King/Queen, or Prime Minister as having great emotional intelligence, integrity, and an exciting vision. Others could not disagree more! You all see and experience leadership differently, given your upbringing, cultural context, values, goals, religion, personality type, socioeconomic status, politics, etc. We all have implicit leadership theories – our personal constructions of what constitutes effective, good, and sound leadership.

Personal Attributes

Likable personality – Research suggests that people are more likely to be influenced by individuals they like (Cialdini, 2001). Likability is important and generally means being pleasant to be with and breathing life and energy into the group or team. However, this does not imply that you, as the leader, do not hold others accountable nor engage in difficult conversations.

Shows integrity – Showing integrity consistently is straightforward in concept but complex in practice. Displaying integrity and modeling the way requires intense self-awareness and consistent reflection. It also requires that you are open to feedback. Leadership requires a strong moral compass and courage to stand up for your beliefs – even in the face of criticism.

Models Curiosity & Learning as a Way of Being – Leadership and learning should be synonymous. Great leaders are voracious learners. They are curious by nature and have an insatiable thirst to better understand the dynamics at play.

Displays a Growth Mindset – While the team may not “yet” have all the right systems to yield desired results. Great leaders believe a recipe exists and tirelessly work to move the needle and move closer and closer to their vision of the future.

Process-Oriented Attributes

Communicates a compelling vision – A compelling vision is an ideal future state. Great leaders skillfully elevate the emotional state of followers, and even the most mundane work can be made (more) meaningful and engaging. Perhaps even a source of pride. Great leaders elevate the emotional state of others.

Always thinking about process – Leaders balance two significant tasks – relationships and process. The leader can prioritize one over the other, and the team or organization can suffer. Leaders must focus on the process because, in the end, a portion of their legacy will be based upon the results achieved under their guidance. Are we closer to the vision, or are we stuck?

Communicates clear expectations – Great leaders set clear expectations. As a follower, you know how to win while they are leading. Generally, an effective leader clearly defines the roles, priorities, and expectations of individuals and the team. They clearly communicate how others fit into the vision and *why* their role is critical to success.

Raises the heat – Leaders help individuals and teams accomplish more than they thought possible. They raise the heat, challenge others to work at their edge, and are relentless about pushing beyond the assumed boundaries. The zone of proximal development is the ideal balance of challenge and support.

Delivers/Defines results – Great leaders are expert problem solvers and are skilled at navigating complex challenges with their team. Would Abraham Lincoln be held in the same regard if his efforts failed? Jane Addams? Some would argue that the individual did not lead effectively if the desired results were not achieved. Another way to look at this concept is that it is up to the leader to *define* outcomes so the team knows what success looks like.

Relationship-Oriented Attributes

Emotional intelligence – Leadership is complex and very difficult to do well. Leaders assume heightened levels of stress and are emotionally triggered consistently. Emotional intelligence is the awareness and regulation of emotions in self and others (Goleman, 2000). Leaders must be aware of their emotional state and sometimes regulate as appropriate. Emotional intelligence does not mean that leaders ignore their feelings. It is the opposite – they are acutely aware of their feelings. However, the leader understands the need to adjust and regulate as necessary.

Navigates Conflict – leaders understand that inherent in the role is the element of conflict. Great leaders are skilled at getting in and out of difficult conversations with a sense of grace and understand that doing so is critical to maintaining positive relationships when possible.

Names the Wins - great leaders understand that the work can be long and tiring. Skilled leaders name the small wins and the contributions of team members along the way. Doing so provides all with “power pellets” to keep others motivated, enthusiastic, and working above and beyond toward the goal.

Prioritizes relationships – While leaders are always thinking about the process, they are also tasked with keeping a close eye on relationships. This could mean relationships with individual team members, external stakeholders, or myriad other individuals in the sphere of influence. In this instance, you are focused on relationships within the team. Great leaders build strong teams that will work above and beyond for the whole.

Five Reflection Questions

1. Think of a leader with whom you work closely. How successful are they at managing both relationships and processes? What are the ramifications of this?
2. When it comes to leadership, what does intervening skillfully actually look like?
3. What happens when a leader does not communicate clear expectations?
4. Why is raising the heat such an essential concept for leadership? What happens when a leader who does not prioritize relationships tries to raise the heat?
5. Has someone effectively led if they did not produce results?

Further Exploration

- Read – [Masters of Love](#)
- Watch – [Why Good Leaders Make You Feel Safe](#)
- Watch – [Three Non-negotiable Mindsets & Skills for Leaders](#)
- Listen – [Dr. Ron Riggio - Leadership: Here's What We Know...](#)
- Listen – [Ed O'Malley - Leadership: It's Risky and Rare](#)
- Listen – [Dr. Barbara Kellerman - Leader Followers & Contexts](#)

Questions or Comments?

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Personal Leadership Profile

Please provide a 3-4 sentence answer for each. A great way to answer these questions is to use the dictation feature in Word – press “Function-D” or go to the “Edit” menu and go to dictation.

- Learning is critical. This is how I continually learn and develop.
- Three things to know about the culture here are...
- Three “hot buttons” that you should know about when working with me...
- *Three things to know about working with me...*
- My top three requests of you include...
- You have permission to...
- *We can all improve, develop, and grow. I am working on...*
- *The best way to communicate with me is...*
- My major priorities include...
- *At times I can...*
- What I hope for you is...
- What I hope for our organization is...
- *At times, people can perceive me as...*
- What you should know about the culture of our department...
- Our cadence for checking in will be...

- Others have described my management style as...
- *A few of my core values include...*
- *When I am stressed, you may notice...*
- *To win with me, you need to...*
- People who work for me succeed when...
- When people who have worked for me derailed, it's because...