

11 Leadership Qualities: A List of Skills to Make a Good Leader

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Whether running your own business or leading teams in an office setting, the best leaders require a strong set of leadership qualities to help positively interact with their employees, team members, and clients.

Behavioral theories suggest that leadership skills aren't ingrained and can be taught – people can obtain good leadership qualities through teaching and learning these skills over time.

The most important qualities of a good leader include integrity, accountability, empathy, humility, resilience, vision, influence, and positivity.

“Management is about persuading people to do things they do not want to do, while leadership is about inspiring people to do things they never thought they could.”
– Steve Jobs

This article on leadership qualities covers the top qualities and skills that make a great leader.

Let's get started.

What Are the Leadership Qualities that Make a Great Leader?

Irrespective of how you define the word *leadership*, you can't deny that certain individuals can greatly impact the lives of others based on their experience and insights.

While we're all living different timelines on the journey of life, we look to leaders for guidance and advice.

While some leaders seem like they were naturally born that way, leadership skills can be learned. It doesn't matter if you haven't led before. There are certain characteristics, traits, and skills that ultimately build the most effective leaders. Learn these and you can change the lives of others.

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

1. Communication

If you're in a leadership position or role, good communication skills are one of the leadership attributes that are absolutely crucial. Using language to perform one-to-one communication is really all that we have as human beings.

Yes, there are non-verbal cues, but being able to express yourself openly and build empathy with other people is the foundation of effective leadership.

And what is the #1 most important part of communication?

Listening.

Good leaders listen and pay attention to all of their followers, employees, and every single individual person they are leading. Good leaders, and even great leaders, are not born; they are made.

Right up there with empathy, the only way to get people to follow you is to make them feel heard.

One of my favorite quotes from Dale Carnegie from *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is, "Talk to someone about themselves and they'll listen for hours."

This is 100% true. The more you make real eye contact and show sincere interest in the lives of others, the more people will be magnetically drawn to you and passionately speak about their lives. They'll become inspired, feel heard, and begin to know, like, and trust you.

Alternatively, when you show no interest, lack eye contact, and pretend not to care about personal stories that other people tell, they will automatically shut down, stop sharing as much, and feel self-conscious about their own interests.

Communication is one of the most important qualities of a good leader. You have to be a good communicator if you actually want your followers to trust you fully.

2. Integrity

C.S. Lewis said, "Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching." Without integrity, no real success if possible. You can't expect your followers to be honest when you lack integrity yourself. Honest and great leaders succeed when they stick to their word, live by their core values, lead by example, and follow-through.

Integrity is the cornerstone of all other leadership qualities.

There are many things to look for in people with integrity, including:

- Apologizing for mistakes

- Highlighting the work of their employees and downplaying their own contributions
 - Giving the benefit of the doubt when circumstances are unclear
 - Being appreciative of people's time
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3. Accountability

For accountability, a great leaders need to follow the advice of Arnold Glasow when he said, "A good leader takes little more than his share of the blame and little less than his share of the credit."

Strong and good leaders are accountable for the team's results, good or bad. They hold themselves and their employees accountable for their actions, which creates a sense of responsibility among the team.

They give credit where credit is due, and take responsibility for blame when necessary. Being accountable and leading by example is one of the quickest ways leaders can become good leaders are by building trust with their team.

Being responsible for the actions and behaviors of those around you is essential to developing leadership qualities, like accountability.

4. Empathy

Truly great leaders have enough open-mindedness to understand their followers' motivations, hopes, dreams, and problems so that they can forge a deep personal connection with them.

Empathy is understanding. Empathy is one of the fundamental leadership qualities. Empathy isn't just being a nice person. It's a mindset that enables leaders to:

- Make better predictions
- Improve work strategies
- Inspire loyalty among their teams
- Better their negotiation tactics
- Increase creativity

Understanding where people are coming from helps facilitate a more human environment where team members are more productive and leaders thrive.

Cultivating the leadership quality of emotional intelligence is one of the great leadership attributes you can possess. Very few leaders understand the difference between being "kind" and having emotional intelligence. Only an effective leader understands the power of being empathic with the people that they lead.

For example, if an employee is consistently 15 minutes late, good leaders won't impute blame on them right away and even better leaders will solve the *why* questions. Why are they late?

Maybe they're dealing with a personal struggle at home, health issues, or car troubles. Real leaders are empathetic with their teams and deeply understand their motivations.

After all, what's more important to human communication than understanding others?

5. Humility

When it comes to developing leadership qualities, it can be tempting to become enamored with a new title or status instead of putting in the actual work to become a good leader with humility.

However, great leadership styles focus on problem-solving and team dynamics much more than self-promotion. A good leader will never be effective if they're more concerned with themselves than with the well-being of their team. As Thomas Merton said, "Pride makes us artificial and humility makes us real."

Being humble and vulnerable with their team members will make a leader much more relatable and effective.

6. Resilience

The true grit of a good leader is not how they perform during good times, but how they roll up their sleeves and produce when times get difficult.

Great leaders with positive attitudes lead by example and rally their team no matter the circumstances. It's this inherent positivity that helps react to situations with a calm, collected manner and focus on solutions rather than on problems.

Resilience is one of the leadership qualities that is earned from experience.

7. Vision

Jack Welch who is one of the great business leaders of our time said, "Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion."

Additionally, John C. Maxwell stated, "People buy into the leader before they buy into the vision."

A company's vision only goes as far as a leader's influence over others. Good leaders clearly set the organizational direction and exercise keen decisiveness. Decision-making is key to new ideas, ensuring team members know the bottom line, and understand the goals and the mission in front of them.

True leaders inspire loyalty, enthusiasm, and commitment, help remind everyone of the big picture and challenge people to outdo themselves.

Vision is one of the leadership qualities that people assume you are born with. That just couldn't be further from the truth.

Every great leader has had to develop the leadership attributes of vision and foresight, it wasn't gifted to them. They honed in on the skill of becoming a world-class visionary for their organization and the people they lead.

Sharing this vision and compelling others to act is a secret trait of successful leaders.

8. Influence

Some leaders believe that when they attain a certain level of leadership status and those leadership qualities we have talked about are owed to them. This is not the case.

Leadership and influence are not interchangeable and respect has to be earned, not given.

Here are some things that leaders can do to increase their influence:

- Clearly state what they want
 - Connect with people emotionally
 - Make others feel important
 - Be vulnerable and charismatic
 - Work toward commonly shared goals
 - Ask for suggestions and input
 - Build real, lasting relationships
 - Act professionally on social media sites like Facebook and LinkedIn
 - Have self-awareness
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9. Positivity

Leaders inspire their team not based on their own goals or outcomes, but on their exhibited behavior, life outlook, and attitude in any given situation.

It's often said that employees and direct reports exhibit the behavior of their managers – and good leaders need to lead by example at all times while mirroring how they want their team to act.

This comes down to positivity. Even the calmest workplaces can get stressful at times – it's more important how leaders react to this stress with a positive outlook rather than get flustered and place blame.

Positivity isn't one of those leadership qualities that should be overlooked and deemed not important. Being positive during stressful or unfortunate situations is a sign of strength. It is a sign that even though things aren't going as planned you can still keep your head on straight and lead your people.

10. Delegation

A difficult transition for many leaders is shifting from *doing* to *leading*. Many new leaders are accustomed to doing all the work themselves and struggle to let others handle responsibilities on their own. Great leaders must elevate their team – they must be more essential and less involved.

This requires leaders to shape others' thoughts and ideas toward a common goal. They give their team everything they need to be successful and get out of the way, not directing their path, but setting clear expectations and explaining where the finish line is.

They aren't scared of their subordinates' successes and don't feel threatened by them. One of the most important leadership qualities of good leadership is delegating tasks and elevating their team. Through this delegation and elevation teams shine, as they are able to contribute in the most meaningful way.

11. Confidence

To be an effective leader, you need to roll up your sleeves and take charge. This includes being confident enough to lead, knowing that your plans and vision are not only viable for the team but the absolute best decision possible.

Being confident in every situation is one of the leadership qualities that you must develop. Truly great leaders are able to be confident during any situation even if they feel fear or uncomfortableness.

If you lack self confidence in a leadership role, people will spot that quickly. "Make it 'til you make it," they say about self confidence – and that is 100% true. The more that you believe in yourself, the more you'll be able to manage any stressful situation.

True leaders are the ones that don't just talk about problems but come up with their own solutions fearlessly.

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Adam Enfroy is a full-time blogger and affiliate marketing expert. Join Adam and 500,000 monthly readers on AdamEnfroy.com to learn how to scale your influence at startup speed. Before starting this blog, Adam managed digital marketing teams for large SaaS startups and reviews the best software to run your online business. He has been featured in over 100 publications, including Forbes, Business Insider, and Entrepreneur.