

# Leadership

## *Good Leaders Are Made, Not Born*

Just as the title says, good leaders are made, not born. Becoming a great, or even a better, leader is determined by your desire and willpower. If you have the desire to develop good leadership qualities through a continuous process of study, education, training, and experience, then you can become an outstanding leader.

Leadership is influence. It is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish a mission, objective, or task while increasing the group's integrity and morale.

Leaders are often associated with managers or those in authority. True leaders can be in a management position, but that position does not necessarily make them a leader; the position only means they're the boss. There is a difference between being a leader and having authority. Effective leadership instills in others the *desire* to achieve high goals and objectives; bosses merely tell people to perform a task or objective. Authority is granted by others; leadership is learned and earned. Leadership is not about authority, but about personal qualities that are learned and developed, enabling one to gain influence over others, which often leads to authority. You don't have to be in a position of authority to be a leader.

The difference between a leader and a boss is summed up well by the following comparison.

The boss drives group members.....the leader coaches them.  
The boss inspires fear.....the leader inspires enthusiasm.  
The boss says "I".....the leader says "we."  
The boss makes work drudgery.....the leader makes work pleasant.  
The boss says "Go".....the leader says "Let's go."

There are different ways someone becomes a leader. Some of these are:

- Natural personality traits thrust some people into leadership roles.
- A crisis may cause leadership qualities to surface and motivate some people to rise to the occasion.
- Some may choose to become leaders by learning and developing leadership skills.

A leader's success doesn't solely depend on which way he becomes a leader, but *choosing* to become a leader and learning the skills necessary for effective leadership certainly give an advantage to those desirous of sustained success and a minimal amount of trial and error.

## **The Two Most Important Qualities of a Leader**

The basis of good leadership is *honorable character* and *effective communication*.

### ***Honorable Character***

Before someone will follow you as a leader, they must *respect* you as a leader. For them to respect you, they must *trust* you. People won't look at your credentials or list of qualifications first; they will observe what you do and say in an effort to determine who you really are. They are trying to determine whether you are honorable and trustworthy or deceiving and self-serving. Are you looking out for the interests of others or are you only looking out for yourself; how do you use, or misuse, your authority?

To your subordinates, leadership is everything you do that affects the organization's objectives and their well-being. A respected leader is in constant evaluation of:

- Who he is (beliefs and character)
- What he knows (job, tasks, human nature)
- What he does (motivate, implement, provide direction)

People want to be guided by those they respect and who have a clear sense of direction. To gain this respect, you must be ethical and convey a strong vision of the future.

## Character Traits of Extraordinary Leaders

There are distinct character traits that will cause others to follow your leadership.

1. **Integrity** – Integrity is evident when you do what you say you'll do. It means that you're trustworthy and that you can be relied upon to keep your promises. If others can't be sure you will live up to your word, they will not want to follow you.
2. **Optimism** – People don't want to follow someone with a gloomy outlook, feeling that the future is dark. People want to follow someone who sees a bright future and feels confident that they can get there.
3. **Dedication** – Followers want leaders who are more dedicated and committed than them. People follow those who are in for the long haul, someone who will stick it out even in the rough times because they see the importance of the goal.
4. **Tenacity** – When the going gets rough, a leader taps in to that trait that will not let them bail out. He sees the bigger picture and knows what is on the other side of the obstacle. He is determined to reach the goal and bring as many with him as possible.
5. **Motivation** – A leader motivates others to do their best. His job is to get others out of their comfort zone and moving toward the goal. He does this by raising the enthusiasm and desire of his fellow team members.
6. **Embraces change** – A leader knows that if you don't change, you don't grow. He sees a need for change, embraces it, and pushes forward to make it happen. He must also convey to others the benefits of change and motivate them to embrace it as well.
7. **Risk taker** – A leader knows that risk is a part of growth and accepts it. While others are avoiding taking risks, the leader is calculating the risk and focusing on what will be gained by taking it. Reassuring others of the need for taking risks is a part of every leader's job.

## *Effective Communication*

Surveys of employee groups indicate that effective communication is vital to employee satisfaction in an organization. Employees want communication in three areas:

- They want to understand the company's overall business strategy.
- They want to understand how they contribute to achieving key business objectives.
- They want the company to share information on how it is doing overall and specifically how their division is doing.

A leadership role comes with three functions. You must have all three to be successful and effective as a leader. Not having all key functions is like removing one leg from a three-legged stool. These functions are:

- Authority: the right to make decisions.
- Responsibility: assignment for achieving a goal.
- Accountability: acceptance of success or failure.

A leader must demonstrate knowledge and ability in the following areas.

- He must know the group members and be interested in their welfare.
- He must know their hopes, ambitions, abilities, limitations, and prejudices.
- He must know the things the members want to learn, or at least where and how to acquire the knowledge.
- He must motivate members to want to learn new skills and gain new attitudes. Without motivation, there is no learning; and without learning, the member loses the desire to be a part of the group.
- He must know how to establish communication between the members.

- He must know how to conduct or supervise meetings and activities.
- He must know how to evaluate his own effectiveness and how to get the group to evaluate itself and its progress.

# Principles of Leadership

As stated earlier, a leader must be in constant evaluation of himself—who he is, what he knows, and what he does. To do this, follow these ten principles of leadership.

1. **Know yourself and seek self-improvement.** Seeking self-improvement will continually strengthen your attributes. This can be accomplished through activities such as reading, study, and classes.
2. **Set a good example. Be a good role model.** Your team needs to see what they are expected to do as well as hear it.
3. **Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions.** Continually search for ways to guide your organization and teammates to new heights. When things don't work out like you had hoped, don't blame others. Take corrective steps and move on.
4. **Be technically proficient.** As a leader, you must know how to do both your job and the jobs of your subordinates.
5. **Make sound decisions.** Use all the tools at your disposal to make sound and timely decisions.
6. **Know the people on your team and look out for their well-being.** You've heard the saying; people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.
7. **Develop responsibility in your teammates.** A sense of responsibility and other good character traits will help them be happier and more productive.
8. **Keep your team informed.** Keep the lines of communication open with your superiors and your subordinates. People have a need to feel informed and up-to-date on things that affect them.
9. **Be clear in explaining assignments, consistent in supervision, and ensure they are accomplished.**
10. **Train your group as a team.** Develop and maintain a “team” mentality in your group.

## Six Keys to Good Human Relations

- 1. Always admit when you've made a mistake.** Others will appreciate your honesty and take comfort in knowing you're just as human as they are.
- 2. Praise the accomplishments of others.** Everyone needs affirmation, especially from those in authority and those closest to them. Look for positive ways to affirm them and build them up.
- 3. Seek and value others' opinions.** Everyone has an opinion and feels like their opinion is valid and valuable. Even if you don't agree with them, acknowledge the value of their opinion and be appreciative.
- 4. Treat others with respect.** Always be respectful and polite to others. Simple gestures such as a smile or a handshake say a lot about you and what you think about others.
- 5. Be considerate of others.** Even with the most harmless of intentions, we can offend or be inconsiderate of others. Take others into consideration at all times and don't do anything that offends, or might offend, them.
- 6. Always be appreciative.** There are few words more important than "Thank you." Simple words of appreciation go a long way in making others feel valuable and that they are making a contribution to the group.
- 7. Have a team mentality.** "We" is a word that includes others and contributes to the cohesion of the group. "I" is a very self-centered word and should be used very sparingly. Having a group mentality leaves no room for big I's and little you's; everyone is a valuable part of the team.

# Styles of Leadership

There are different styles, or ways, of leadership. Most people would fall into at least one of these categories, majoring in one style and occasionally operating in another. There are no good or bad styles, just different. In fact, they are all valid and necessary. Different situations and different personalities call for different ways of doing things, and all styles will be needed at some point.

The most effective leader is one who can operate in whichever style is necessary at the time and can change freely from one to another. This ability is one that is learned from practical application and much practice; you shouldn't be disturbed if it's not immediately mastered.

The four leadership styles are *Authoritarian Leader*, *Team Leader*, *Relational Leader*, and *Vanishing Leader*. Let's look at each one in more detail.

- **Authoritarian Leader** – Orientation: high task, low relationship. The leader who uses this style of leadership is highly task oriented and is hard on his subordinates. He tends to like for everything to be on a schedule. When something goes wrong, he tends to focus on who is to blame rather than on what is wrong and how to prevent it. He expects others to do what they're told without question or debate and is intolerant of what he sees as dissent. It is difficult for his subordinates to contribute or develop.
- **Team Leader** – Orientation: high task, high relationship. This type of leader leads by example, trying to foster an environment of teamwork in which all members can reach their highest potential—personally and professionally. He encourages his team to reach their goals as effectively as possible, all the time working to strengthen the bonds between team members. He forms and leads the most productive teams.
- **Relational Leader** – Orientation: low task, high relationship. This leader works primarily on the reward system to maintain discipline and encourage others to meet their goals. He is almost incapable of using more punitive and coercive measures in fear that it may damage his relationships with the other team members.
- **Vanishing Leader** – Orientation: low task, low relationship. This leader uses “delegate and disappear” tactics. He is not committed to either the accomplishment or maintenance of the task. Basically, he lets the team do whatever it wishes and



prefers to be detached from the team. By doing this, the team may suffer from a series of power struggles.

The Team Leader is the most desirable style of the four. However, the other three have benefits as well. You will most likely experience situations when one or more of the others will be necessary. The Authoritarian style can be used to develop a sense of discipline in an unmotivated member. The Relational style can be used to encourage a member to do his best. The Vanishing style can be used to allow your team to gain self-reliance.

# The Leadership Tightrope

Sometimes being a leader is reminiscent of watching a three-ring circus act. Leadership is like walking a tightrope, juggling, and balancing an object on your nose while riding a unicycle. That may sound a little whimsical, but it's pretty accurate. You have to be all things to all people and it gets very demanding at times.

An important factor in leadership is constantly refining your skills. A great leader is always working on himself to become more effective. Refining your personal qualities and skills sometimes is like walking a tightrope. If you get off balance and lean too far either way, you'll fall; balance is the key. Here are some qualities of a good leader that are very important.

- He must be strong without being rude.
- He must be kind without being weak.
- He must be bold without being a bully.
- He must be humble without being timid.
- He must have pride without being arrogant.
- He must develop humor without folly.
- He must be realistic without being pessimistic.

# Optimism

Optimism is defined as expecting the best possible outcome or emphasizing the most positive aspects of a situation. It influences how we interpret the past, experience the present, and imagine the future. Optimism helps the leader to be more motivating and engaging. No one will want to follow a leader who believes where he is going is worse than where he already is. Following are ways optimism affects your followers.

- Optimism improves people.
- Optimism inspires your followers to greater heights.
- Optimism breathes life into your followers.
- Optimism helps your followers take necessary risks.
- Optimism causes good things to happen.
- Optimism helps your followers see possibilities instead of problems.
- Optimism helps your followers seize opportunities.
- Optimism brings hope and encouragement.

Optimism and pessimism are very different and bring about very different results. They are, however, similar in a couple of ways. They are both self-fulfilling and they are both a choice. Leaders must choose optimism if they are to lead their followers to the mountaintop.

# Making an Extraordinary Leader

There are leaders and then there are extraordinary leaders. Once you acquire and/or develop the traits, characteristics, and principles of leadership and move into a leadership position, your goal is to stay there and make the most of it. Following are specific ways you can maintain and optimize your experience as a leader.

- **Be a great follower** – Everyone has to follow someone at some time. To be a great leader, you must first be a great follower. Glean from your experience as a follower to either emulate the good qualities of your past leaders or ensure you don't repeat the bad qualities.
- **Put others first** – Set your heart on leading others to greatness rather than striving for your own greatness. Also, take the hardest jobs for yourself and assign the easier ones to your followers. They will see that and you will gain their respect.
- **Learn something from every situation** – Good or bad, every situation has a lesson to teach you. If you are careful to learn each of these lessons, you can repeat the successes and avoid the mistakes in the future.
- **Surround yourself with wise counsel** – Choose those people who show wisdom and listen to their counsel. Sometimes you will not have the answer. If you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and have trusted advisors, you will receive the right direction. It's then your responsibility to move toward that end.
- **Lead by example** – It's hard to push people into action. You must lead by example. People will follow a true leader anywhere.
- **Focus on the future** – Keep the goal in your sights at all times. If you lose focus of where you're going and what you're trying to accomplish, you will lose your way and lead others down the wrong path.
- **Ride the momentum** – There are times and situations that produce momentum, both good and bad. Of course, you should try to stop the negative momentum and turn it around. But people also try to stop positive momentum as well. Learn to ride the positive momentum as far as it will take you; don't stop a good thing from happening.

- **Do not boast about the privileges of leadership** – With any leadership position comes privileges that others don't have. Those who pay a higher price for a higher position deserve their perks. As justified as they may be, others can resent the success and privileges you've earned. Flaunting privileges that others don't have may cause a backlash and can harm your ability to lead. Whenever possible, show your appreciation and share the rewards and privileges with your subordinates.
- **Choose the best people** – An extraordinary leader searches for people who are better than him. Many leaders feel threatened by others' strengths and will choose those less competent in fear of losing their position. In reality, choosing the best people will motivate you as their leader to better yourself, and your team will grow together.
- **Choose an assistant who complements you** – Most people will choose an assistant who is like them so they'll be more comfortable. An extraordinary leader will choose someone whose strengths are in different areas than his own. Your assistant should be able to do the things you can't and have a perspective that you don't have. This will produce a well-rounded team and better results.
- **Give power away** – If your organization is going to grow and make a difference, you must empower others to do the work and make decisions. Your job as a leader is to develop your teammates. This means teaching them about leadership and giving them exposure to other tasks and perspectives.
- **Don't run away from difficult decisions** – Being a leader comes with the task of making decisions for other people. Sometimes those decisions are difficult and may cause pain, but nevertheless must be made. An extraordinary leader doesn't run from a difficult decision. He looks at all sides of the issue, considers what's best for the overall health of the organization, and makes a decision based on that information.
- **Remember, there will be casualties** – As your organization moves forward, there will be those who refuse to go or just can't keep up. Just as in battle, casualties are inevitable. Your job is not to try to prevent casualties, but to keep them at an acceptable level. If you don't have casualties, you don't have advancement.

## Developing Leadership in Others

Obviously, you understand the importance of effective leadership. You were probably trained by an effective leader or perhaps served as a leader's assistant at some point. With leadership comes responsibility—a responsibility to teach others to become effective leaders. Here are some areas to stress to your student, and maybe even apply to yourself.

- **Know your vision** – People are drawn to those who know where they're going. If there is no clear picture of what you want for your organization, where are you leading others? (*Proverbs 29:18 - Where there is no vision, the people perish...*)
- **Be aware** – Know what is going on around you and inside of you. You should be aware of others' feelings, reactions, triumphs, and challenges. You should also know your strengths and weaknesses.
- **Respond properly** – You should always respond, not react. A reaction is driven by your emotions and usually leads to inappropriate words or actions. A response is usually thoughtful and calculated.
- **Be clear on your values** – Know what you stand for. Leadership requires self-discipline, but before you can discipline yourself, you must know the ground rules and parameters set by your values. When your values have been determined and you live by them, you can be driven by character rather than emotion.
- **Exhibit a positive attitude** – Having a positive attitude and an optimistic outlook on life makes any situation better and is uplifting to others. Being positive will draw people to you and become contagious.
- **Be enthusiastic** – Enthusiasm coupled with a positive attitude is the match that will ignite a fire of productivity in your followers. It also is contagious and draws others to you and your cause.
- **Speak well** – True power is based on the ability to communicate effectively. To communicate effectively, you must be able to speak well in public and private. Speaking well is more than just good grammar. It's expressing yourself in a coherent, well-organized way that will inspire others to action.

- **Listen well** – Listening is a skill that’s just as important as speaking, but it must be done twice as much. It’s easy to hear someone speak, but do you really listen to what and how they’re saying it? Listening utilizes more than just our ears; it uses our eyes, nose, hands, and hearts as well.
- **Accept people as they are** – There’s always room for improvement in everyone, but you must accept people for who they are and respect their strengths as well as their weaknesses. Expect the best from others, but don’t expect them to be someone they’re not.

# Dealing With Change

Change defined is *transition from one state or phase to another*. Everyone and everything goes through times of transition, or change. It's inevitable and predictable—seasons change, fashion changes, our physical bodies change with age, etc. Most people do not like change, or more so the fear of the unknown, because they feel out of control and have trouble adapting to its results, but change can be good. It forces us to change, to be flexible, and to adapt. Following are some observations on change.

- Change is not a respecter of persons.
- Change is uncomfortable.
- Change pushes us out of our comfort zone.
- Change is awkward at first.
- Change is sometimes necessary.
- Change is forceful on those who will not let go of the past.
- Change is not moved by crying and worrying.
- Change brings out strength you didn't know you had.
- Change highlights those who are ready for it.
- Change requires perseverance and endurance.

People who do not embrace change wholeheartedly are obstacles to those who do. There are those, both leaders and followers, who resist change and feel as though it's their duty to protect their organization from it. Organizations that won't embrace change, won't survive.



# Leadership Techniques That Can Improve Any Organization

Following are five leadership practices used by Captain Michael Abrashoff, retired Navy commander, in his service aboard the USS Benfold. Abrashoff took command of a crew with poor morale and an unimpressive performance record and turned it around to become the top crew in the Navy. These techniques can be used by your organization or business to do the same.

- **You are the problem** – If you’re not getting the results you’re looking for, you should look inward before blaming someone else. Ask yourself three questions every time you face this dilemma.
  1. Did you clearly articulate the goals you were trying to achieve?
  2. Did you give people the time and resources necessary to succeed?
  3. Did you give them enough training to get the job done properly?

80% of the time, Abrashoff found that he was a part of the problem and that his actions could have altered the outcome significantly. By resisting the temptation to blame others, you effectively align your actions with your words. If your actions don’t line up with your vision and what you say, you will cause others to distrust you.

- **Question every rule** – Whenever a crew member sought his approval or signature, he would ask them, “*Why do we do it this way?*” If the answer was, “*Because this is the way it’s always been done,*” he would say that that was not good enough and would instruct them to find out if there was a better way of doing it. Before long, his crew began doing their homework before they ever came to him. They could then explain why things were done a particular way and could occasionally present a better way of doing it. He said it drove his crew crazy, but it created a culture that sought new and better ways of doing things.
- **Build trust through responsibility** – Give people responsibility, train them, and push decision-making down the chain of command. When a leader places greater confidence in his people and provides them the training they need to succeed, they will respond by performing at levels higher than what’s expected of them.

As they achieve greater results and greater confidence, they will trust that their leader will help them get the training and opportunities they need to succeed. People will fail. How a leader handles that failure is infinitely important.

- **Thank the messenger** – Bad news is going to happen in even the best-run organizations. There's no way around it. Leaders not only need to set the vision, but also deal with accidents that happen along the way. They can only do that if people feel comfortable bringing bad news to their attention.

*“At the end of the day, I want people to be honest with me. That means more to me than anything. But if they think I'm going to shoot the messenger, people will put off those hard conversations until the time when value starts to erode. While I may have been able to construct a solution last week, there's now a deadline looming, and the best I can do is damage control. That's bad. Communication is the key in any organization.”*

- **Promote risk takers** – *“I've encountered companies that only promote people who don't make any mistakes. You show me someone who doesn't make any mistakes, and I'll show you someone who's not doing anything to improve the business. The business climate today demands that we continue to try new things. By promoting people who never fail, organizations are sending a terrible signal to other employees that it's not worth going out on a limb or making any bold improvements for the company.”*

Leaders need to resist a zero-defect mentality that says, If you make one mistake, you're finished. *“It's a cancer in the organization. Mistakes are learning opportunities. On the Benfold, we tried never to make the same mistake twice, but we always encouraged crew members to try new things, to brainstorm new solutions. Because we were training at lower and lower levels of the crew, people gained experience, confidence, and accountability. Sure, they screwed up sometimes, but they were thinking for themselves. If all you have is order takers on your crew, then all you have is people who will never take accountability for their actions.”*

## Steps to Leadership Excellence

- **Do not tolerate weakness in your life** – If you've been on this earth for any length of time and paid any amount of attention to what goes on around you, you can see the results of people tolerating and playing around with their weakness(es). There have been many great men and women, both famous and virtually unknown, who have lost everything because they allowed a tiny weakness to grow like a cancer until it devoured their character.

Your weakness may be in the very early stages. You may even be able to joke about it, but you cannot afford to let it continue one more day. Anything that you cannot walk away from today, right now, has control over you. What controls you will eventually make you miserable. That misery will bleed into every relationship and every other area of your life. Here are some hard facts about your weakness.

1. Everyone has a weakness.
2. Your weakness will bond you with the wrong people and separate you from the right people.
3. Weaknesses can emerge in any stage of life.
4. Weakness searches for every opportunity to grow.
5. Weakness searches for friendships that will tolerate or excuse it.
6. Your weakness will not remain with you alone, but will infect those around you.
7. Weakness seeks to displace your strengths.
8. One weakness is a breeding ground for others.
9. Your weakness must be completely destroyed.
10. Overcoming your weakness brings incredible rewards.

You must not view your weakness as a family pet that you need to take care of, but as a wild animal that is out to destroy you. You must come to the place that you despise and reject your weakness. Only then will you want to overcome it. Don't bond with your weakness; you must become its enemy.

- **Allow others room to make mistakes** – No one is perfect; no, not even you. Everyone requires and deserves the opportunity to change. Pressures in life cause each of us to make mistakes. During these times, you must show mercy. Without mercy, you will make inaccurate assessments, say hurtful words, and make bad decisions. When you made mistakes in the past, didn't it make things worse when someone jumped to conclusions or spoke harsh words to you? Allow yourself to forgive them. Here are some principles of mercy.
  1. Forgive them as many times as necessary.
  2. Don't determine their future by their past mistakes.
  3. Give them time alone.
  4. Allow them the opportunity to explain or express themselves.
  5. Give them time to evaluate the situation and discover *truth*.
- **Surround yourself with dependable people** – You should be in the habit of confirming everything. Dependable people seem to be in the minority these days. People are quick to tell you what you want to hear and then do what they want to do. You will find few people who will fully complete an assigned task with excellence. These people are diligent, aggressive, and trustworthy.

**Ways to recognize a potentially undependable person:**

1. They do not write down what you've asked them to do.
2. They don't regularly keep a pen and paper with them.
3. They don't ask additional questions about the assignment.
4. They like to use the word *try*. ("I'll *try* to get that for you.")

### **Things you should remember when giving instructions to others:**

1. Clearly communicate how important the instruction is.
  2. Give the instruction to only one person.
  3. Document the date you gave them the instruction.
  4. Require a continuous progress report.
  5. Set an appropriate task deadline and get them to agree on that deadline.
  6. Never give the instruction to someone you feel is not competent enough to complete it.
  7. Never assume your instructions have been completed—always follow through.
- **An ending is just as important as a beginning** – Life is a series of phases. Just as we begin a new phase in life, we will surely end it. The same goes for relationships—just as they begin, they will end. To enter a new phase or relationship with happiness and joy, you must end the present one correctly and with dignity.

### **Keys to a correct ending:**

1. End it gently. Your attitude when you end a relationship determines whether it can be restored in the future.
2. End it with forgiveness. Holding grudges or unforgiveness will eat at you like a cancer.
3. End it with kindness. Be kind in everything you do. There is never a reason for bitter, cutting words.
4. End it with promises fulfilled. Always fulfill commitments and responsibilities. This is a sign of good character.

5. End it with integrity. Most people aren't honest in telling why they end a relationship. Be honest and accurate about why the relationship is ending. You don't have to give every detail, but what you say must be accurate.
  6. End it with courage. You may not want a phase or relationship to end, but if it must, you must do it with courage.
  7. End it with expectation. When one door closes, another opens. You must approach it with the expectation of something better.
  8. End it at the right time. It must be at the right time according to the Holy Spirit. Do not move on as a result of anger, misunderstanding, or someone else's recommendation. The time must be for the right reason and at the right time.
- **Respect others** – If you want others to respect you, you must first respect others—their time, schedule, responsibilities, wishes, etc. You must consider others' time, schedule, responsibilities, wishes, etc. as important as your own. Caring is at the root of respect. The Bible commands us to honor and prefer one another (Rom. 12:10). Know who those people are that show disregard for others. If they don't respect your time, they don't respect you.