



# Characteristics of Effective Leadership

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**Abstract—** An effective team leader has a variety of traits and characteristics that encourage team members to follow him. Team leaders naturally possess certain qualities, such as authenticity, compassion and integrity or learn leadership skills through formal training and experience. The qualities of an effective team leader inspire the trust and respect of the team and stimulate production within the workplace.

## I. INTRODUCTION

What makes an effective leader, there appears to be no guaranteed consensus. Essentially outstanding leaders become a fine balance between traits, abilities, behaviors, sources of power, and aspects of the situation. These become the determining factors of the ability to influence followers and accomplish group objectives. Therefore, any member of any group, at any one time, may assume a leadership role, given any degree of innate traits and the circumstances surrounding the events.

## II. AUTHENTICITY

Within your organizational context in general (the organization you lead at large), and within your team in particular (the team you lead, made up of your direct reports and yourself), authenticity means exposing yourself as you really are – including not only your strengths, accomplishments, personal qualities, etc., but also (and this is vital) your weaknesses, mistakes, personal flaws, etc.

Why is authenticity among the effective leadership characteristics? Why is it important to show yourself “naked” with the people you work with in order to build a high performance organization?

Because if you are authentic, you are more likely to inspire trust—especially to the people whom work closest to you: Your direct reports. But if you are not authentic, you are less likely to inspire trust.

And without trust, it is very difficult if not impossible for people to be frank—without trust it is impossible to build a culture of candor.

And without frankness – without candor... it is impossible for people to voice out loud what is really going on in their heads. If people don't truly expose their different perspectives, if people don't put on the table what they really think, if people don't say why they don't agree, your team won't have a rich dialogue that takes into consideration all the possible disagreements, perspectives, and possibilities, and as a consequence of this, your team won't be able to take the best possible decision – mediocre decisions don't lead to organizational high performance.

In order to take the best possible decision you need an open communication environment, so that all possible disagreements, perspectives, and possibilities get on the table for all to see and debate; and to have access to all this you need



candor – as simple as that. Also, the essence of leadership is change – if people don't trust you as their leader, it will be very difficult for them to follow you; hence, you won't be a very effective leader. When employees don't trust their leaders, they don't commit to change – and now days it is impossible to think organizational life without change.

Whether you like it or not, if you are the leader or if you want to grow as a leader, you need to inspire trust in the people that are all around you – especially in your direct reports. And trust feeds itself from your authenticity. However, why so many leaders don't even think about authenticity? Besides the fact that this is something they don't teach you at business school, it is because when you are authentic you feel vulnerable – and frankly, nobody likes to feel vulnerable.

But think about it: What's more important, reaching organizational peak performance and a truly sustainable competitive advantage, or your aversion to vulnerability? If you prefer to feel comfortable not feeling vulnerable, for the good of the organization you lead, you must not be a leader. Effective leadership characteristics – read authenticity: The good, the bad, and the ugly about yourself. Do you truly want the organization you lead to reach peak performance? Be real, be bare, be authentic with your direct reports – they will admire you for that, they will trust you, they will feel compelled to tell you the truth. As their leader, you are their role model.

#### A. Integrity

Integrity is also one of the effective leadership characteristics – and the reasons are pretty much the same: If you are honest, upright, and unabridged – if you have integrity, you are more likely to build trust. If you are not, people won't trust you. Simple, isn't it?

Authenticity and integrity nourish trust.

Besides: for the good of any organization, anyone who does not have integrity shouldn't ever be a leader.

Or put in a different way: anybody who aspires to be a leader should go through a screening process to determine if such candidate has integrity or not.

Integrity is not an optional leadership characteristic – integrity is a must.

It is amazing that now days – in the twenty first century – there are so many leaders without integrity. Why do we allow this, if we – human beings – are supposed to be so smart?

#### B. A Healthy Ego

A healthy ego means having the self-confidence to show you as you really are – authentic.

But it also means your voice is not the only voice in the room. A healthy ego means you have the ability to listen – you take into consideration others' points of view, you learn from them, and as appropriate, you act based on your entire team's most strategic output.

Organizations benefit from leaders who recognize their own mistake who take responsibility for them, and who learn from those mistakes.

On the contrary, if your ego is too big and you think your voice is the most important one, you represent a latent danger for the organization you work for.

Leaders who pretend to know it all mold the culture of their corresponding organizations in such a way that the behavior of their employees hides – consciously or unconsciously – their own limitations, mistakes, weaknesses, etc. The result? There is no organizational learning, there are no open communication environments, the decision – making quality is poor, etc.



### C. Execution Effectiveness

When a decision is ethical – when an ethical decision making model is used – it is much more likely to involve the hearts and minds of the people who will execute such decision – because they all know that such decision is in the best interest of everybody. On the contrary, when a decision is not ethical, people are less likely to commit to the decision; they are less likely to take responsibility for its execution.

If the people in charge of executing the decision made commit themselves to such decision, the execution is more likely to be effective.

On the contrary, if the people in charge of executing the decision made do not commit themselves to such decision, the execution is less likely to be effective.

### D. Three Ingredients Feed Commitment

- Clarity of understanding that the decision making process is ethical – team members must perceive that the decision making process is both fair (everybody in the team has an equal chance to participate and influence the final decision), and clean (not corrupted – team members must perceive that the decision making process is for the good of the organization, not for the good of just a few members of the organization), Hence, the relevance of the ethical decision making model.
- Clarity of understanding of the logic behind the decision – participants need to understand why it is the best decision, even if they don't agree with it.
- Clarity of understanding of the decision made – team members need to clearly understand what was agreed (what, when, who, how, etc.)

When people clearly understand all these three dimensions of the decision making process, they are more likely to commit to the decision made.

And vice versa, when team members don't understand the why of the decision, the process by which the decision was made, and the decision itself, they are less likely to commit themselves to the decision made.

Nevertheless, the more conflict there is (because of the diversity of ideas), the less likely it is that people will clearly understand the decision made, which will in turn reduce the commitment to whatever it is decided.

## III. CONCLUSION

Although leadership has many definitions and varied criteria for success, it is defined by the assumption that it influences a process that many cases is situational. We must also remember that leadership needs to be constantly developed, reinforced and be able to effectively foster commitment within an organization. In order for leaders to be influential, their followers must accept and respond to their persuasion. Followers are the ones who determine that an individual must be accorded leadership status. They do this by comparing a leader's presented characteristics or image against deeply held assumptions about what constitutes a credible leader. They may do this by examining a leader's competence and trustworthiness. Thus, judgments of these characteristics are based on image and impression, as well as experience and evaluation.

## References

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