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What Makes a Good Leader?

One of the best ways to begin improving your leadership style is to emulate successful leaders. So, I asked a number of executive and community leaders I know to give me their definition of leadership and what they think are the qualities in a good leader. There were so many responses; I couldn't fit them all into one article. Here's my series of three articles on leadership.

Bill Bonnstetter, Founder of Target Training International in Scottsdale, Arizona, is brief and to the point. Bonnstetter says, "Great leaders have mastered these personal skills: Goal Orientation, the Art of Influence, Self-Management, Interpersonal Skills, and Personal Accountability."

Mike Etheridge, COO of Brenner Oil Company in Holland, Michigan, believes "Great leaders are born. If one is to be a good leader, focus, goals and the successful accomplishment of those goals needs to be added to the recipe. Great leaders have a sense of knowing what to do when that chapter of the 'How To' book has not been written yet. So many great leaders get on the other side of a crisis or project and ask, 'Where did that come from?' It is this special ability along with the persistence, focus, motivation, example and loving commitment, coupled with the assistance of associates that have grown from good to great in their respective positions, that will in the judgment of history, make a great leader."

When he was alive, the late **James D. Cockman**, former Chairman of Sara Lee Foods Food Services Division, told me that great leadership involves, "Compassion, caring, trust. Integrity is the foundation. People do not care how much you know until they know how much you CARE."

Larry Bonorato, General Manager of Saturn of Greenville writes, "A leader must give totally honest feedback to the individuals on his/her team as soon as possible. Each team member must know exactly where they stand, what is expected of them, and what they must do to meet the expectations of the leader. The leaders should seek out and get input from the individual team members. However, the leader makes the decision based on what is best for the team. A leader cannot have a 'bad day.' If the leader is depressed, he/she should stay home. The speed of the leader is the speed of the team."

Gil Gerretsen, President and Head Coach of BizTrek Intl., Inc. writes, "Those who are truly successful exhibit two important characteristics which puts them in rare company.

First, they must carry a 'command presence.' They exude a certain panache that makes it clear they are in charge and are comfortable being in that role. This cannot be faked. Second, they have a mental time horizon beyond today, this week or even next month. In the military, the difference between a private and a general is often their time horizon. A general is thinking and planning for things years down the road while a private mainly thinks about today and then the next paycheck."

Gary Ault, Publisher of the Greenville Magazine and South Carolina Magazine says, "One common thread each of our Nelson Mullins Business Person of the year honorees have always had is their own 'guiding principle' by which they live. Leadership is all about values, attitude, commitment, enthusiasm, motivation, vision, and teamwork. Leadership is also about self-responsibility. Never point at others to blame for things that happen to you, look only inwardly for positive action and results. Always take responsibility in your business and private lives."

Elizabeth Belenchia, President of Carroll Properties Corporation in Spartanburg believes, "A good leader is empathetic, poised with a vision, delegates unique requirement to those impassioned to complete their part of the mission (with minimal supervision). Leading requires knowing the strengths of the leader and each team member. Leadership brings out the best in the entire team. It creates a harmonized group." (Are you listening, apprentices?)

An excellent way to determine the characteristics of your leadership style is to develop your own personal leadership style inventory. Do a DISC assessment that defines your behavioral style and a personal values assessment that shows your attitude toward leadership and what motivates you.

Then have those you manage do the same assessments. If you're one of your company's managers responsible for motivating their employees, these tools will have people pointing at you when someone wants to know what makes a good leader.

Leadership Qualities – Characteristics of Leadership

*One of the best books on leadership is **Good to Great** by Jim Collins. Collins researched a number of companies that were able to sustain outstanding growth over a period of 15 years while their competitors grew moderately, stayed flat, or lost money.*

In all cases, the CEOs of those companies were men with humility and small egos who put the organization's needs above their own. They took the blame when things went wrong and gave credit to others when things went right. Collins calls these men "Level 5" leaders, who have mastered the art of leadership.

His book inspired me to ask a number of business and professional leaders around the country to give me their definitions of what makes a great leader. Here is the second of three articles on leadership.

Dr. Jeffrey Graves, former President and CEO of KEMET Electronics Corporation, offers the following on key elements of leadership: "Communicate a clear 'vision of success'

for the team/group/organization. Apply 'facilitative leadership' skills to draw ideas from the team and evolve them into a sound strategy/plan with ownership from the team. Drive 'execution' relentlessly, every day...a clear and logical plan with a few key metrics that measure success. Identify, train, coach/mentor, and reward your top talent...they are the cornerstone of your future."

Debbie Griffith, Founder and President of Professional Network Connections, expresses a belief shared by many that, "A great leader is one who knows when it's time to lead, and when it's time to sit back and follow!"

Bill Hemphill, President of Hemphill Consulting, who is a 31-year veteran of the Air Force, says, "In the military we study leadership *ad nauseum*." Hemphill believes, "A leader puts his organization's mission first, and his/her subordinates second. A leader has to be quick to commend and slow to anger. A leader must have and be willing to share his/her passion for excellence. A leader must be willing to do anything he asks his subordinates to do."

C. Dan Joyner, President and CEO of Prudential C. Dan Joyner Company gave me two quotes on leadership he says he's used for many years. "Leadership: The ability to inspire others to join you in reaching to the stars. Leadership: involves building people up through praise and recognition, not being critical of their efforts, even when they fail."

Clifton Parker, President of G&P Trucking, believes, "Leaders are to have no moral or behavior handles that others can grab onto and say, 'This disqualifies this person from leadership.' I believe a leader's qualifications reveal someone who has his or her private and public life in balance, able to exercise moderation and humility while maintaining a good reputation. The time to figure out if someone can lead isn't after they've assumed the role."

What I'm seeing from all of the leaders in this series of articles is that leadership involves being able to get the work done successfully (task-orientation) and being able to manage and lead those responsible for the organization's success (people-orientation). Most of them focus on the people aspect – how to encourage, motivate, inspire, and develop the best in each person.

In ***Good to Great***, Collins found successful leaders are able to hire the right people for each job. Great leaders agree with him that, "People are not your greatest asset. The *right* people are."

Executive Leadership Skills – Leadership Quotes

Are leaders born or made? Most people would say both – part nature, part nurture. Great leaders have innate qualities of integrity, humility, fairness, vision, and determination. And they have the training and experience to lead with greatness.

There are many well known exceptional leaders in all fields of endeavor. There are also some great ones who aren't well known outside their own communities. I asked a

number of such people what makes a good leader. Here are the remaining answers in the last of three articles on leadership.

Todd Korahais, CEO of Keller-Williams Realty in Greenville, SC, believes, "There are great managers who devise and implement systems that people imitate, but that's not leadership. The final definition of leadership is Legacy. If the leader never eyes, grooms, and develops his/her replacement(s), they never lead. They were simply imitated."

Judy Suiter, President of Competitive Edge, Inc. in Atlanta says, "The most important qualities of good leaders are: They tell the truth. They show respect for all people inside and outside their organization. They have an accurate perception of their own style and how their style impacts others. They have a clear understanding of their own values and practice 'walking their talk.' They have the ability to get others to want to follow them. They put the needs of the organization above their own."

Sandy Vilas, CEO of CoachInc, writes, "A leader listens to his team and always encourages input. A leader is a visionary who can take the business to new heights while keeping the team excited and motivated. A leader is not afraid to make and implement tough decisions. A leader works hard at catching people doing things right and acknowledges them appropriately."

John Walton, Director of Safety and Compliance for Averitt Express, Inc. believes, "My goal has always been to lead my associates in a manner I would want my leader to be and that leadership style begins with having a clear vision, being a good listener, asking questions, identifying clear pinpoints, objectives and measurements for every team member. Secondly, as a leader you must know the strengths and weaknesses of each associate and make sure to position them in a manner they will succeed in completing their tasks. Be bold enough to take responsibility for failures and be quick to share the credit with the team. Good leaders surround themselves with quality people and it is critical to empower each to use their natural abilities to be the best they can be and continue to improve. It is imperative as a leader to set a positive example, be willing to do the little things, be confident in your role and instill discipline in the team. It is my desire to know when and how to lead and on the flip side, when and how to follow!"

John Warner, Vice President of Strategy and Communication for KEMET Corporation, says, "The best leaders I have known are builders. They have a passionate vision for what they want to create, and they are very focused on getting there, sometimes to the point of being seen as myopic. They have empathy for the people around them, at least in terms of getting people to buy into helping them achieve their vision. People around great leaders usually do not see as clearly where the organization is going, either because they had not done the same intense homework to understand the landscape or because they do not have the God-given talent to see a future that does not yet exist. Great leaders attract people to them, not because people necessarily agree with where the leader is going, but because they believe the leader is going somewhere important and they want to go along to what they believe will be a better place."

Jane Yousey, a Life Coach from Connecticut who teaches a graduate leadership course at the University of Indianapolis, is clear and to the point. She says, "The sign of a mature leader is the self-awareness that there is MUCH more still to learn and master."

Future leaders of the world, take note. These are some of the qualities possessed by the world's greatest leaders.

*Get a free leadership skills assessment by clicking in the upper right corner at <http://www.coachannette.com> and clicking in the upper right corner. Annette Estes is a Certified Professional Behavioral and Values Analyst who can help you develop your executive leadership skills. An excellent resource for leaders is Annette's ebook, **Why Can't You See it My Way?** which you can order at <http://www.resolveconflictnow.com>*
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