

Cultivating Leadership Skills



A **leader** is the person who leads or commands a group. It is the person who sets direction, establishes an inspiring vision, and creating new things for others to follow.

Leaders always possess extraordinary capacity and demonstrate strengths in four categories: executing (as an arranger and achiever), influencing (as an activator and maximizer), relationship building (as a relator and developer), and strategic thinking (as a learner and analyzer).

The top ten leadership skills are described as:

1. **Communication skills**

Refer to the written, verbal/oral, and nonverbal (vocal tone, eye contact patterns, body language) capabilities and styles

2. Critical thinking ability

Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. It is the ability to think in an organized and rational manner in order to understand connections between ideas and/or facts. Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. It is a skill that allows an individual to make reasoned judgments and informed decisions to the best of the person's ability.

3. Problem-solving ability

4. Decision-making ability (**SWOT** strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats analysis)

5. Commitment, responsibility, and positive attitude

6. Trustworthiness

7. Motivational skills and tactics

Effective strategies to motivate employees such as conveying expectations for performance to an employee, providing feedback regarding progress or lack of progress towards desired outcomes, addressing problems or obstacles that are limiting success, providing rewards for desired outcomes, issuing warnings prior to enacting sanctions, and publicly recognizing others who have responded in the desired manner.

8. Delegation skills

Include clear, effective oral and writing communication skills, listening skills, training the subordinate, and giving trust and providing timely feedbacks to the subordinate.

9. Time management

10. Vision building

Set direction, build an inspiring vision, and create new programs.

To be a successful leader, candidates need to develop the following characteristics and capabilities:

1. Strong desire to be a leader (to lead a group accomplishing challenging tasks)
2. **Excellent communication skills**
3. Being visionary, creative, and directive
4. Distinguished critical-thinking ability
5. Distinguished problem-solving ability
6. Distinguished decision-making ability
7. Excellent motivation skills
8. Excellent delegation skills
9. Efficient time management
10. Fundamental knowledge of the tasks to accomplish

Leadership skills can be developed and enhanced through intentional and intensive training. To develop leadership skills, pay adequate attention and act in daily life on the following:

1. Be intentional

Growth does not happen by accident. Decide where you need to grow and intentionally plan how you are going to get there. It is not always comfortable: It takes vulnerability and the willingness to make mistakes along the way. What specific steps can you take toward intentional growth?



2. Know yourself to grow yourself

Have you ever sat down and reflected on the person you are? What is your vision for your life, and WHY is that your vision? How are your skills a fit for that vision? Understanding your abilities and passions makes it easier to plan for them. A personal growth plan is not a one-size-fits-all strategy. Design one that works for you.

3. Ask why: be curious & listen

There is a yawning chasm between the person who neither formulates interesting questions nor asks for help and the person who poses profound questions to others and seeks advice. What questions could you pose in order to learn from others? How do you show people you are listening?



4. Take time *for* reflection

Reflect on an event or a relationship. What turned out to be the main thing? What deserved more or less of your time? Which relationships helped you grow? What outcomes did your choices produce? Did those outcomes satisfy you? Did those outcomes move you toward your goals? Reflection brings closure and understanding...and growth.

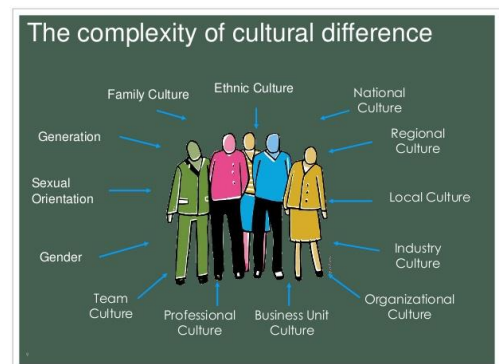


5. Live above the line

According to John Maxwell, a leader cannot garner respect from others unless their ethics are without question. “A leader not only stays above the line between right and wrong; he stays well clear of the ‘gray areas’.” What behaviors are above the line, and what behaviors are below the line? Will we all see the line the same way?

6. Awareness of others’ feelings and cultural needs

Culture is too often thought of as just someone’s race, ethnicity or religion. A person’s culture is formed by much more than that. It’s critical to discover your own cultural lens and work to expand it. How do you show respect and understanding of others’ feelings and cultural needs?



7. Surround yourself with the right people

Nutrition tells us, “You are what you eat.” Well, you also are what you hear...from those who surround you. The relationships in our lives lift us up or tear us down. They add, or they subtract. Great friends and colleagues make you better than you are. They challenge you and support you in doing what you do best. Those closest to the leader will determine the level of success for that leader.

8. Explore the gap between where you are and where you want to be

A bridge builder does not begin work without first understanding the terrain on both sides, as well as what lies in the gap. A leader does the same thing. What skills and experiences form the gap between where you are and where you want to be? What do you need to do to bridge that gap?



9. Find models you can learn from

The people you follow, the models you emulate, the mentors you take advice from help shape you. It is hard to improve when you have no one besides yourself to follow. Who is your next-step mentor? Who can help you sharpen your skills? Who are your long-term models – your yodas?



10. Look for problems to solve

When you hear the word “problem”, is your emotional response positive? Probably not. But problems bring opportunities. Turbulent winds could be seen as a problem for an eagle, but those winds help the eagle reach greater heights, use less effort, stay up longer, and fly faster. A problem is only a problem if you allow it to be. What happens when you view problems as opportunities?



11. Collaborate with & learn from others

Perhaps Vanilla Ice was smarter than anyone thought. In his hit *Ice, Ice Baby*, he coined the phrase, “Alright stop. Collaborate and listen.” Collaboration – working together more interdependently than in simple cooperation – elevates group work in a way that merely being agreeable with each other would not. Collaboration is built on respect and shared values; it takes time and effort to develop.



12. Use influence for good

At its essence, leadership is about having influence over others. That is power. Each leader has a choice whether they use that power for good or for bad. Ultimately, those who use their influence to manipulate or coerce others are doomed to lose; people will not continue to follow someone they cannot trust. On the flip side, leaders who use their influence to affect positive change will find themselves with loyal lifelong followers.