

6 Effective Leadership Skills in the Workplace

Are great leaders born or made? By adopting these six effective leadership skills in the workplace, you can be more productive and efficient — and inspire o

'Great leaders are born, not made.'

I believed it to be true for the majority of my career — and only recently did I realize how much this perspective limited my personal growth and career development. Maybe you've also fallen for the myth that leadership is a skill reserved for an elite few, and in the process, cheated yourself out of a powerful opportunity for growth.

While all of us do have talents and traits inherent to the personalities we were born with, some of the most important components of a successful career can be learned, including effective leadership skills.

If you want to become more productive and efficient in your work environment and inspire others to do the same, start by focusing on becoming a stronger leader. The good news is, developing these skills doesn't require a special education or degree, or even an official management title; anyone motivated enough to grow can become a leader.

In my own career journey, I've noticed some of the most important traits most great leaders have in common. Want to be one of them? Here are six effective leadership skills to adopt and refine in your work, starting now.

1. Communication

To lead well, you have to have a vision — but you also have to know how to communicate it effectively.

When I first started my company, I was so passionate about my vision. I developed my product with this vision in mind, knowing it could transform our customers' lives. The challenging part was learning to communicate that vision as I grew my team.

It's one thing to inspire people with a big-picture vision when you're launching a company, but it's an entirely separate skill to find creative ways to articulate aspirations for the future and rationale for transformation.^[1]

Good communication isn't just the ability to write a good email or nail a presentation. It's the ability to inspire, motivate, and challenge people with a broader vision, even in the doldrums of everyday work — finding ways to help each member of your team understand the big picture of where you want to go and how their roles and projects contribute to it.

2. Integrity

When I think of effective leadership skills, the first thing I think of is integrity. And I'm not the only one. In one study of 195 leaders across 15 organizations, 67 percent of participants rated 'high ethical and moral standards' as the most important leadership attribute.^[2]

Taking shortcuts or being dishonest might lead to temporary wins. However, if there's one thing I've learned in my career, it's that cutting corners doesn't lead to lasting success. And it certainly won't be rewarding.

As author and business leader Jon Huntsman, Sr. writes in his book *Winners Never Cheat*, character is the defining trait of a successful leader:^[3]

'There are no moral shortcuts in the game of business or life. There are, basically, three kinds of people, the unsuccessful, the temporarily successful, and those who become and remain successful. The difference is character.'

I think of integrity as integrating your values with your words and your words with your actions. When you lead with integrity, you build trust among your team and stakeholders, which means they're more likely to go the direction you steer them.

3. Decisiveness

It's not always easy to make a high-stakes decision, especially if you know people are relying on you to make the right choice. More often than not, a critical decision you make won't pan out the way you planned. If this happens, you will be faced with another critical choice: Will you assume responsibility? Will you be willing to take the blame? And, more importantly, will you be motivated to find a better way forward for your team?

The ability to make a decision under pressure is an important part of leadership, but the true mark of a decisive leader isn't the ability to make the right decision. Great leaders don't just know how to make good decisions for those they're leading; they're also willing to take the risk of knowing if things don't work out, they will be the ones held accountable.^[4]

4. Focus

Imagine you're a passenger on a boat. There's a storm approaching, and the waters are becoming choppy by the minute. Not only that, but it's getting dark outside, and you're not sure which way the shore is. Who would you look to for a sense of safety?

A leader is a lot like the captain of a ship. The person at the helm isn't just responsible for deciding where the ship is going to end up at the end of the journey, but actually steering it in the right direction, even during a storm. That's why staying focused is such a crucial part of effective leadership.

Great leaders keep their eyes toward success, which requires planning ahead, staying organized, and thinking through potential scenarios and outcomes — all the while considering other paths forward if things don't work out.^[5]

5. Humility

If you want to encourage others to learn and grow, you have to be willing to learn and grow yourself. This requires humility, or a willingness to be flexible, admit you're wrong, and even more importantly, openness to learning from other people. Another way to look at humility is teachability.

Practically, how can you implement this skill in your workplace? Problem solving is a great opportunity to practice being a teachable leader.

For example, if you're trying to find a solution for an issue, try not to push your own agenda. When your team senses you're open to (and eager about) their ideas, a greater diversity of potentially transformative ideas will emerge.

Plus, when your team knows you encourage free thinking, they will likely be more motivated to take initiative and work independently to develop their own solutions and ideas.

6. Connection

As a leader, you have the privilege of bringing out the best in the people around you — a key ingredient for success in your company. But to foster success, you have to focus on connection first.

Neuroscience teaches us that if people don't feel emotionally safe, they won't be able to access the creative, strategic part of their brain. Instead, they'll be focused on survival — which isn't exactly a recipe for flourishing, in life or at work.

It's the leader's responsibility to facilitate connection and belonging in the workplace so that others can live up to their full potential.

To foster a deeper connection among your team — and empower them to live up to their potential — view them as people, not just as workers. Say hi with a smile. Remember details about their personal lives. Compliment them when they do well, and let them know you see their hard work and contributions.

As you build meaningful relationships with your co-workers, you'll be able to live up to your potential as an effective leader, too.

More Tips on Leadership Skills

1. 5 Traits of Positive Leadership Any Leader Should Master
2. 12 Bad Leadership Qualities to Be Aware of
3. What Makes a Good Leader: 9 Critical Leadership Qualities

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