

*Inspire others to do their best work and you leverage your most important resource – people. Leadership is a learned skill. Improve your effectiveness as a leader and you improve your ability to create and accelerate change.*

## OVERVIEW

### What is Leadership?

Leadership influences behavior. Effective leadership creates positive change by inspiring and motivating. It creates an environment where colleagues love their work and strive to perform at their highest capability. Developing leadership skills will help you to engage and inspire your team to achieve their very best.

Leadership is largely a learned skill. Although some people have a seemingly natural ability to inspire others, everyone can develop leadership skills over time. In fact, most of us can become very effective leaders. So what are the characteristics of an effective leader?

### Eight Characteristics for Effective Leadership

#### Visionary

An inspiring vision gives us direction and purpose. It becomes the reason to roll up our sleeves and do the challenging work of creating change (all improvement is driven by change). It makes our work more rewarding and more exciting. Great leaders create and communicate inspirational visions.

#### Passionate

Passion and enthusiasm are contagious. They create positive energy that fuels and drives others to achieve new heights. Great leaders take advantage of every interaction to demonstrate passion and enthusiasm for their work.

#### Confident

People are naturally attracted to confidence. We want to share in it and we want to be a part of it. We perceive that confident people know what they are doing and where they are going. This is especially important in times of uncertainty – when confidence is particularly scarce. Great leaders project an aura of confidence.

#### Consistent

Consistency builds trust and respect, and we all prefer to follow people we trust (and respect). Use your vision as a touchstone to drive consistency in your actions. Great leaders are reliable and consistent.

TO ME	BY ME	THROUGH ME
I have little control	I take control	I let go of control
I do what I am told	I tell others what to do	I describe what is needed
I follow	I direct	I influence
I end up making excuses	I take responsibility	I give others responsibility
I often don't enjoy my work	I do my work	I love my work

*Are you ready for an honest appraisal of your leadership skills? Compare the three columns and select the one that describes you most accurately. The further to the right – the more developed your leadership skills.*

#### Motivational

When you motivate others you directly influence them and accelerate the rate at which vision is transformed into reality. People are motivated when they feel challenged and supported while completing worthwhile work. Recognize that the most effective motivation is individualized and your style should be tuned to the individual. Great leaders motivate individuals to do their very best work.

#### Decisive

Being decisive transforms confidence (knowing what to do) into progress (doing it). For each decision – seek advice, review facts, make a choice, and stick with it. Timely, rational and logical decision making is a key trait for building trust in the capability of the leader. Great leaders recognize that sometimes the worst decision is no decision.

#### Results-Oriented

People thrive on progress. It's exciting. One of the best ways to build momentum is to demonstrate results, and one of the best ways to consistently demonstrate results is to work in short cycles with frequent "deliveries" (an **AGILE** method of working). Focus on the next steps that will help you achieve your vision. Great leaders get things done.

#### Humble

Humility is a very appealing characteristic. It helps make leaders approachable and likable, and gives them space to make the occasional mistake. Great leaders share credit (leaving the smallest share for themselves) and take on more than their share of responsibility for mistakes.

## BENEFITS

In the **short term**, being conscious of leadership traits and behaviors will help you to engage people in your team and move them in a shared direction.

In the **long term**, mastering leadership skills will open whatever path you choose for your future. Leadership skills provide a great deal of power to influence others – use that power wisely.

## ROLES

Leadership is focused on one person – you. There are few better investments than mastering your role as a leader for positive change.

Role	Description
You	Create an improvement mission with the team (a vision). Reinforce that mission with passion and energy on an ongoing basis. Get people excited about the "journey". Motivate the team and ask for feedback that helps you to continuously improve your leadership skills.

## KEY INSIGHTS

### Establish a Vision

One of the most effective ways to unify a team is to establish an exciting vision that creates a strong sense of unity and shared purpose. The most effective visions are easy to understand, simple to communicate, and include a roadmap of landmark deliverables.

Once you create a vision, reinforce it through both words and actions. Create an exciting journey that others will naturally want to join.

### Fuel Your Team

Energy fuels change. Every team strongly reflects how its leader thinks, feels, and acts. A high-energy, positive leader will influence their team to be high-energy and positive, just as a deliberate and consistent leader will encourage similar traits in the team.

Take responsibility for managing your physical and emotional energy. If your energy levels are low, erratic or inconsistent, consider how this will be interpreted by the team. Identify and practice healthy ways to maximize and sustain your energy throughout the workday.

### Tune Your Style

The Situational Leadership® model by Hersey and Blanchard identifies four styles of leadership. Your goal as a leader is to adopt the style that best matches the person you are leading, in the context of the task they are completing.

Style	Situation (When and How)
<b>Directing</b>	The employee is new to their role, new to the task, or has performance issues. Demonstrate how the task should be completed. Keep responsibility for the quality of their work. Aim to build competence.
<b>Coaching</b>	The employee is becoming competent at the task, but could be more efficient or effective. Discuss and set objectives and provide regular feedback. Keep some responsibility for the quality of their work. Increase motivation.
<b>Supporting</b>	The employee consistently completes the task effectively and is engaged in their work. Provide some guidance but leave more choices to the employee. Help them understand how their choices affect the business.
<b>Delegating</b>	The employee is highly skilled and highly engaged (they consistently achieve outstanding results with limited guidance). Provide considerable freedom to the employee. Delegate tasks that are stimulating and will help them make a real difference to the business.

Over time, build a team where you can delegate most work. Achieve this through training (increasing competence) and motivation (increasing commitment).

### Be Your Best Self

There are many aspects to being an effective leader and it is easy to get lost in the detail. A simple countermeasure is to ask: "Am I being my best self?"

The strongest position from which to influence others is to be your best self. So, ask a follow-up question: "What one thing could I do better?" Write it down, and focus on it until it is no longer the answer to that question.

## Pay Attention to Management Skills

Effective leaders inspire and motivate others to do great things. Effective managers deliver great results. Leaders define the future. Managers guide us through today. Ideally, an effective leader not only inspires and motivates their team; they also have the necessary management skills to deliver outstanding results. For example:

Manager	Why It's Important
<b>Sets Goals</b>	Converts the vision into specific and actionable tasks.
<b>Prioritizes</b>	Picks the most important tasks for driving progress.
<b>Follows Up</b>	Creates accountability for completing tasks.

### Own Your Time

It's easy for most of your time to evaporate away through a series of small interruptions and tasks that may seem urgent but don't really forward your vision. The countermeasure is to "own your time".

Look critically at every task, and over time minimize, eliminate, or delegate work that does not add sufficient value. In many cases, this will require a front-end investment of time to coach and support employees so they can work more independently and take on a wider range of tasks (creating more time for you).

## LEVEL AND DIFFICULTY

**The Level is Foundation.** Leadership skills affect just about every interaction and are fundamental to driving progress and change.

**The Difficulty is Moderate.** The core concepts of leadership are straightforward; however, they require discipline, practice, and self-awareness to become ingrained behavior.

## RATE YOURSELF

How effective is your leadership style? Answer ten simple questions to see how close you are to being a model leader.

Question	✓
1. Are your interactions with others positive and motivational?	
2. Do you choose influencing others over directing and controlling?	
3. Are you the best and most enthusiastic version of yourself?	
4. Do the people you influence consistently perform their best work?	
5. Do you control (own) the majority of your time?	
6. Do you delegate a majority of work to others and then let go?	
7. Do you spend significant time each day developing others?	
8. Have you created a shared vision with your team?	
9. Do you reinforce that vision on a daily and ongoing basis?	
10. Do you consistently practice all eight traits for effective leadership?	

\*This topic is also available as part of the XL Improvement Framework.