

## Leadership Attributes & Traits Definitions

### Cornerstone Leadership Skills & Attributes

**Empathetic:** the fundamental people skill that builds on emotional self-awareness. It means to recognise emotions in others. Anyone who wants to lead a successful team must possess this valuable trait. People who are empathetic are more attuned to the subtle social signals that indicate what others need or want. This makes them better at callings such as the caring professions, teaching, sales and management. Empathy is a particularly important aspect of emotional intelligence, and researchers have known for years that it contributes to occupational success.

**Results Oriented:** as a leader, you are responsible for delivering results. In the end, it is not about effort, which is no doubt relevant and very much needed, but what really counts is what is accomplished. Keep this in the forefront of your mind as a guide to your activity. Great leaders spend their energy on the most necessary and important activities to achieve the greatest outcomes. Remember, action orientation is good, but be oriented on the right actions. Do not just be busy; be a busy leader who gets results.

**Values Driven:** you are aware of and actively live your core values. These values form a key part of your decision-making; alignment with others; and fulfilment/enjoyment of life. When your core values are lived, you feel joy, contentment and alignment. When they are breached it may cause frustration, anger, or disappointment. Understanding the root cause of these emotional responses relates to being values driven.

**Self-Esteem:** Part of your job as a leader is to put out fires and maintain the team morale. Keep up your confidence level and assure everyone that setbacks are natural; and the important thing is to focus on the larger goal. As the leader, by staying calm and confident, you will help keep the team feeling the same. Remember, your team will take cues from you, so if you exude a level of calm damage control, your team will pick up on that feeling.

**Listening Ability:** Communication is a two-way street with listening being key to relationship/trust building and effective leadership. Leaders listen well and are self-aware enough to understand that active listening forms part of all interactions, even when busy or time-poor. It is more than simply hearing, providing a deeper insight and context.

**Questioning Ability:** We have all seen it. You are in a meeting and someone asks a great question that unlocks a situation. Delving to understand requires appropriate timing and questioning capability. If you tend to ask questions, make sure they are good questions. The ability to confidently ask the relevant, right question at the right time is a genuine skill. It can also add significantly to the meeting or discussion context and content.

**Giver/Carer:** The best leaders are those who are inherently willing to give to others as a priority. Those who see leadership as something that provides even greater opportunity to take from others struggle to influence and build trust. We have found that many leaders possess this as an inherent skill and attribute, closely aligned to empathy. However, it is heavily influenced by personality, upbringing and background. Quite simply, the most effective leaders are those who care for their team members at least as much as themselves, maybe even more.

**Trust Builder:** An essential element of relationships and connecting with others revolves around the ability to develop trust. Being able to rely upon or place confidence in someone; follow-through on commitments; and being supported without fear of retribution or unfair treatment all contribute to developing a trusting relationship. It is defined through the belief that someone is honest and means no harm. To be trusted and trusting is critical.

## Supporting Leadership Skills & Attributes

**Inspirational:** Being able to inspire people is great when focusing on future goals, but it is also important for the current issues. When people look up to you as a role model and aspire towards aspects of who you are and how you behave, the platform for inspiring others is formed.

**Self-Acceptance:** Understanding, being aware of and most importantly, accepting your faults is an especially important aspect of leadership and development. An inability to notice our true feelings leaves us at others mercy and weakens opportunities to influence. Removing self-criticism and self-judgment in a negative manner requires us to actively embrace who we are. The absence of self-acceptance makes being an effective, capable and efficient leader extremely difficult.

**Self-Motivated:** Striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence. Marshalling emotions in the service of a goal is essential for paying attention, for self-motivation and mastery, and for creativity. Emotional self-control – delaying gratification and stifling impulsiveness – underlies accomplishments of every sort. People who have this skill tend to be highly productive and effective in whatever they undertake. People with this competence:

- Are results-oriented, with a high drive to meet their objectives and standards
- Set challenging goals and take calculated risks
- Pursue information to reduce uncertainty and find ways to do better
- Learn how to improve their performance

**Compassionate:** An emotion prompted by the pain of others. More vigorous than empathy, the feeling commonly gives rise to an active desire to alleviate another's suffering. It is often, though not inevitably, the key component in what manifests in the social context as altruism. In ethical terms, the various expressions down the ages of the so-called Golden Rule embody by implication the principle of compassion: Do to others what you would have them do to you. Deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it.

**Assertive:** Saying what one thinks and convincing others. Informing others what you want, mean, require or expect. Exercising power and authority. Engaging in interpersonal conflict. Confronting, openly disagreeing, saying no, taking unpopular positions. Assertiveness is linked to self-esteem and considered an important communication skill.

**Adaptable:** Flexibility in handling change. People with this competence:

- Smoothly handle multiple demands, shifting priorities, and rapid change
- Adapt their responses and tactics to fit fluid circumstances
- Are flexible in how they see events

**Courageous:** To do what is challenging, or unfamiliar; to risk injury, loss, hardship, or discomfort to reach a desired goal. The courage to speak our mind and not stay silent, simply because we are afraid that other people might not agree with us. To have the courage of one's convictions, to act in accordance with one's beliefs, despite criticism. Implies firmness of mind and will in the face of danger or extreme difficulty.

**Optimistic:** To be comfortable or positive about what is right and present yourself accordingly, even when it is difficult. Disposed to take a favourable view of events or conditions and to expect the most favourable outcome. Having a genuine belief as a leader that things can change and be improved – reflecting a favourable view of events and conditions and the expectation of a positive outcome.

**Committed:** To work hard; to get things done; take on responsibility. Aligning with the goals of the group or organisation. People with this competence:

- Readily make personal or group sacrifices to meet a larger organisational goal
- Find a sense of purpose in the larger mission
- Use the group's core values in making decisions and clarifying choices
- Actively seek out opportunities to fulfill the group

**Attention to Detail:** Someone who has a strong level of attention to detail tends to think things through; to concentrate on details; to be thorough; to be careful; to strive to be accurate. The details matter in leadership, gaining credibility and the ability to influence.

**Sense of Humour:** A sense of humour is an attitude you adopt that allows you to find humour in both positive and negative situations. Having a good sense of humour reduces stress, helps you cope with pain, creates empathy in social situations, and provides a genuine and perceived sense of balance in how you lead.

**Delegator:** Your vision is essential to creating an organized and efficient business, but if you do not learn to trust your team with that vision, you might never progress to the next stage. It is important to remember that trusting your team with your idea is a sign of strength, not weakness. We are all busy as leaders and the more you stretch yourself thin, the lower the quality of your work will become/the less you will produce. Being able to describe clearly and succinctly what you want done is extremely important. Earning the right and trust for people to follow you and allow you to delegate effectively is key.

**Conflict Manager:** Negotiating and resolving disagreements. People with this competence:

- Handle difficult people and tense situations with diplomacy and tact
- Spot potential conflict, bring disagreements into the open, and help deescalate
- Encourage debate and open discussion
- Orchestrate win-win solutions

**Team Oriented:** Creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals. People with this competence:

- Model team qualities like respect, helpfulness, and cooperation
- Draw all members into active and enthusiastic participation
- Build team identity, esprit de corps, and commitment
- Protect the group and its reputation; share credit

**Relationship Builder:** Developing meaningful and effective relationships is a deal-breaker for leaders, after all you need people to follow you if you want to lead. A relationship leader is direct, truthful, and open, but does not play games or isolate people. There is a distinct level of candour to drive home the point, but it is delivered in a way that is humane and sincere. Relationship leaders have versatile approaches and understand when to slow down and solicit ideas or ask questions.

**Initiative:** Leaders with initiative are characterised by their self-starting nature, proactive approach and by being persistent in overcoming difficulties that arise in pursuit of a goal. Taking the time to think through issues and being prepared to offer alternatives based on existing knowledge and experience is showing initiative.

**Open:** The trait distinguishes imaginative people from down-to-earth, conventional people. People who are open to experience are intellectually curious, appreciative of art and sensitive to beauty. They tend to be, compared to closed people, more creative and more aware of their feelings. They are more likely to hold unconventional beliefs and are often more able to see the 'bigger picture'.

**Conscientious:** A tendency to show self-discipline, act dutifully and aim for achievement; planned rather than spontaneous behaviour. Taking responsibility for personal performance. People with this competence:

- Meet commitments and keep promises
- Hold themselves accountable for meeting their objectives
- Are organised and careful in their work - have a strong sense of responsibility and orderliness.

**Integrity:** Research shows that the top thing that employees want from their leaders is integrity. Be honest, fair, candid and forthright, and treat everyone in the same way that you yourself would want to be treated. There is little grey area here, with leaders either possessing and displaying integrity or not. Integrity has a strong alignment to the values of honesty and trust.

**Decisive:** Leaders gain respect from their direct reports by confidently asserting their authority without showing signs of dictatorship. It is important to hone your functional expertise and use communication and sound business principles to illustrate your ability to lead teams. Engage your direct reports so that they trust your ability to make decisions in the best interest of your team members, the department and overall organisation.

**Strategic Thinker:** Strategic thinkers are found to be among the most highly effective leaders. Strategic leaders take a broad, long-range approach to problem-solving and decision-making that involves objective analysis, thinking ahead, and planning. That means being able to think in multiple time frames, identifying what they are trying to accomplish over time and what has to happen now, in six months, in a year, in three years, to get there.

**Communicator:** Communication is defined as a two-way process in which there is an exchange and progression of thoughts, feelings or ideas towards a mutually accepted goal or direction. Communication is a process by which we assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding. People with this competence:

- Are effective in give-and-take, registering emotional cues in attuning their message
- Deal with difficult issues straightforwardly
- Listen well, seek mutual understanding, and welcome sharing of information fully
- Foster open communication and stay receptive to bad news as well as good

**Empowering:** You cannot give someone empowerment however you can most definitely set up an environment and culture that is empowering. Supporting your team is one of the best ways to encourage members to perform well. Empower each individual by making it clear that you trust his or her judgment. Give people the authority they need to do their jobs well and show them an appropriate level of respect.