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6 Seldom Mentioned (But Terribly Important) Leadership Traits

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Quick — tick off the leadership traits that you often hear from conference speakers (<http://www.eremedia.com/tlnt/sometimes-it-takes-the-opposite-approach-5-keys-for-building-better-leaders/#>), read in leadership books or blogs, or study in training programs.

I'm guessing your list includes these: Inspiring, visionary, passionate, focused, disciplined, decisive, ethical.

The lesser known qualities of leadership get far less mention, but still they play a huge role in determining success over a leader's lifetime.

They are:

1. Forgiveness

A vindictive boss imprisons his staff.

When an employee makes a mistake, the boss has a chance to give feedback and help the employee grow (<http://www.eremedia.com/tlnt/mastering-the-art-of-cultivating-a-caring-compassionate-workplace-culture/#>) from the experience. Then the two come to the proverbial fork in the road: To forgive and move forward or to victimize and warn against any future risk-taking that might lead to another mistake.

Other employees learn as onlookers. Does the boss hold that employee captive forever because of the past mistake, or does the employee get to move forward with a clean slate?

If forgiveness is not free-flowing, all employees learn to be extra cautious before contributing new ideas.

2. Optimism

Perhaps the descriptive phrase attached to President Ronald Reagan (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/presidents/ronaldreagan>) more often than any other is "positive attitude." A Google search of "Ronald Reagan" and "positive attitude" will return nearly 200,000 results.

The lesson here is that an upbeat, hopeful attitude attracts followers and encourages people to engage with a mission.

3. Humility

One reason that citizens become so weary during the typical 18-month American presidential campaign cycle is the ubiquitous political speech: "I'm the greatest. I've done this. I've done that. Please vote for me and I'll make all things wonderful."

Of course, leaders must have confidence in themselves to complete goals and to inspire followers to "take the hill" with them.

But that confidence has to be tempered with humility (<http://www.ere-media.com/tlnt/what-happens-when-leaders-show-humility-and-openness-to-feedback/#>). Otherwise, the boastful words and arrogant acts grate on people's psyche.

4. Goodwill

The news media bombards us with stories of those who put self-interest first: Those who feed on greed. Stock manipulators. Drug dealers. Price gougers.

But leaders look out for the welfare of others.

Rather than take advantage of others, leaders wish the best for those around them. They want them to perform well, earn well, and advance in their careers.



5. Compassion

Leaders have the ability to understand how others feel in difficult situations. This emotional capacity allows others to sense their sincerity and goodwill when they offer helpful feedback, instruction, coaching, and even decisions.

Their compassion (<http://www.ere-media.com/tlnt/the-power-managers-unleash-when-they-decide-to-apologize/#>) also helps them mediate conflict and manage interpersonal relationships on their team.

6. Emotional stability

Followers want to count on someone steady at the helm when the ship's in a storm — a competitive storm, an economic meltdown, or a natural disaster.

Leaders who can master their emotions in times of crisis provide thinking space for themselves and those they lead.

This was originally published on Dianna Booher's *Booher Research blog* (<http://www.booherresearch.com/blog/>).

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