

# THE 7 TRAITS OF INFLUENTIAL LEADERS

How To Instantly Become a Great Leader  
By Modeling Top Leaders



# Introduction

Leadership is a skill that everyone should develop and cultivate. Being a leader does not necessarily have to mean being a manager or a politician – it could also mean being a thought leader, or even just being a great parent. The ability to inspire, command and guide others is something that is incredibly valuable and that can help you to accomplish more and even raises your confidence and self-worth.

In this guide, we're going to examine what it takes to be a leader by looking at some of the most important traits that history's greatest exhibit. Every leader is different and part of your journey to becoming one is going to be discovering your own 'leadership style'. With that said though, there are still definitely some common traits that you can develop and some lessons we can learn from influential figures from history. And what you'll find is that in some ways, the most important aspects of being a great leader are not what you would expect.

I hope this guide will change the way you approach leadership and thereby help you to drastically improve your own results.

# 1. A Great Leader Does Not Need to be Liked

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Should a great leader be feared or liked?

The answer is that it doesn't really matter. What's most important is that you focus less on trying to be everyone's friend and more on getting results.

Ultimately, a leader is someone who is trying to accomplish a goal by leverage the power of their team. If your goal is to increase turnover, then you are a good leader *if you increase turnover*. It doesn't matter if you are liked along the way.

And sometimes you *will* have to make hard decisions or break bad news. You need to be willing to do that and not to concerned with how it makes you 'look'. For example, if your superiors tell you that you and your team are going to need to work late, then you need to pass on that information and *not* make excuses. The temptation here is to complain along

with your staff, to whine about how unfair it is and to make rude comments about the capabilities of your higher-ups.

All this does is to make you look unprofessional, to damage the enthusiasm of your team and to make everyone question the rules they're being asked to follow.

This is one of the biggest problems with politics too. In order to get re-elected, a leader needs to make positive change in a short space of time so that the electorate can see the results.

The problem is that some projects only yield results over a long period of time and might even hurt the economy in the short term. Making those decisions would be political suicide and so our country is only ever putting out fires, never growing! This is something that a few famous leaders have managed to break away from. Arnold Schwarzenegger most recently discussed this and the value of being willing to make hard decisions.

You don't have to be unpleasant, but be willing to let your reputation take the hit when it needs to!

## 2. A Great Leader Takes Responsibility

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The reason you need to care less about how others see you, is that this then allows you to take responsibility. You might be passing on orders but for all intents and purposes those are still *your* orders. Own them and don't apologize.

Likewise, when things go wrong because your team was working too slowly, you need to take the flack with your superiors and take responsibility. You were leading them, so if they didn't get the work done, that's *your fault*. Throwing your colleagues under the bus will again only make you seem weak and like someone who makes excuses!

What's more important, is that by taking responsibility for targets not being met and mistakes being made, you are creating a safe 'buffer' for those beneath you. They know that they can make decisions and do what they think needs to be done and not worry about the possible repercussions. You're probably getting paid more than them, so it's your *job* to occasionally get shouted at!

This extends even further to taking responsibility for your own actions and decisions. Leaders make decisions quickly and with confidence and that's not because they always have the answers, but because they're willing to take the flack if their decisions prove to be wrong.

The worst thing you can do as a leader is to force your team to make hard decisions. Looking to politics for an example again, we can consider the recent decision of David Cameron (England's ex-prime minister) to vote on whether or not the country should leave the EU.

This was a decision that most analysts agree the country was ill-equipped to make. In this case, politicians were letting the general public do their jobs for them and the consequences may prove to be devastating. Meanwhile, leader of the opposition at the time (Jeremy Corbyn) was famously non-committal in his views on the subject, losing much of his party to lose faith in him. This is in stark contrast with Nicola Sturgeon – who most would agree is a much stronger leader – who has made her views on Scotland leaving the UK *very* clear.

# 3. A Great Leader Looks After Their Team

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This is one way that a great leader will look after their team but you should also be doing this in every other way possible too.

As a leader, you are responsible for the health and happiness for those that you are in charge of. As long as they're in your care, they're your responsibility. That means that you need to protect them from unfair commands that come from up high and it means that you need to make sure they are comfortable, safe and well looked-after as they work.

A fun example of a leader who embodies this notion is 'Agent Gibbs' from NCIS. Gibbs viciously protects his team and will go to great lengths to get them out of trouble – not only with the bad guys but also with the organization itself. As a result, he takes on a patriarchal role and his team love him for it. Sure, he's a fictional character, but this works in

real life too! Your team is your most valuable resource, look after them.



# 4. A Great Leader Has Control Over Their Emotions

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Another feature that great leaders share is the ability to keep control over their emotions. This is important for a number of different reasons. Firstly, as a leader, you need to be able to stay calm when everything is going wrong around you. As a leader, you will act as a barometer for your team: they will decide whether they need to panic on the basis of whether or not you are panicking – emotions are contagious so you need to stay calm.

Being in control of your emotions is also what will allow you to take responsibility and to worry less about how you look and feel.

Likewise, being able to control your emotions is going to allow you to avoid getting angry at staff when they need reprimanding. This is important too, as just because you are in charge, that doesn't give you permission to get in someone's face.

Stay calm and you will create the sense that you are in control. In turn, this will build confidence in what you say and do and your team will respect you more. This is something else we can see in the case of Gibbs. What does he do when a bad guy pulls a gun on him? He smiles, or just continues talking. That makes him formidable.

Don't mistake the importance of controlling your emotions as not having them. As we'll see later, passion is very important. You do need to know when to get heated, it's just a matter of being able to use that strategically rather than letting it rule your head.

# 5. A Great Leader Leads by Example

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Another trait that is important as a leader is lead by example. That means that you can't be seen to be a hypocrite and that you are going to provide the perfect blueprint for your team to follow.

One way you do this is by dressing the part. If you present yourself well, then it will show you care and that will rub off on your team. Likewise, if you are asking your team to stay late, then you need to do the same: don't ask someone beneath you to do anything that you wouldn't be willing to do yourself.

A great example of this is Winston Churchill. Churchill refused to leave England even when it was being bombed and he even spent his time on the rooftops fire spotting. That gave him much more integrity and won him the respect of the entire nation. Had he fled to Switzerland, what kind of impression would that make? It would have communicated that he didn't feel safe in the UK and that the people that lived there at the time shouldn't either!

# 6. A Great Leader Sees the Bigger Picture

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By staying in command and being willing to take the flack while keeping your team on track, you should find you start to become more and more adept at avoiding mistakes and meeting deadlines and targets. You'll be able to keep the ship afloat in short, but this is not enough if you want to be considered a 'great leader'.

Truly great leaders are visionaries. They are people who can see the bigger picture and who have a goals and dreams for their team. Likewise, they don't get so caught up in the little details that they end up micromanaging – that's what the specialists are for.

The best example of someone like this is Steve Jobs. Jobs was not a programmer, an engineer or a designer: he was someone who had a vision for where he thought the company should go and who knew enough about each area to help his team get there. That's why he became a legend and it's why he is so remembered today.

That said, this *doesn't* mean that you should completely ignore the smaller details. Small things do make a big difference and this is something else that Steve Jobs knew – it's why he was so keen to get things like the typeface just right in his software. Follow suit by spending equal time with every aspect of your project but also being sure not to miss the forest for the trees!

# 7. A Great Leader Has Great Passion

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The reason that Steve Jobs was able to have such a vision in the first place – and the reason he was able to do everything necessary to make that vision a reality – was that he clearly was highly passionate about what he did. He truly believed that computers belonged in the home, that they could be ‘personal’ and stylish – and he dedicated his life to that vision.

You don’t need to dedicate your life but you do need to believe strongly in what you’re doing. This will help you to convey more charisma and deliver better speeches and it will rub off on those that you instruct and command. Just look at the great speeches from people like Nelson Mandela, J.F. Kennedy, Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King... would these speeches have been so impactful if the people delivering them were impassionate?

If you don’t love what you’re doing, then you really have no place leading others to do the same. You need to either find a way to love it and believe in it, or you need to change what it is that you do!

These are just a few of the most important traits that great leaders share, but there are many more besides. If you want to learn more and become the best leader you possibly can be, then be sure to check out the full ebook and start to command your followers with charisma, confidence and passion!