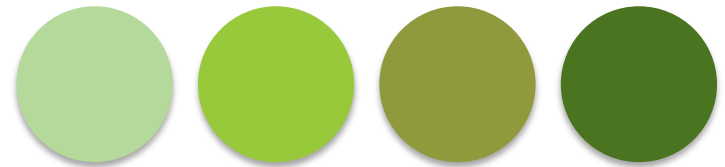


A to Z of Leadership Qualities



Introduction

Great leaders come in all shapes and sizes, genders and cultures, but they all possess many of the qualities I've highlighted in the Think Oak A to Z of Leadership Qualities





Agile

- 🌿 In today's economic climate, it is more important than ever for leaders to be agile.
- 🌿 Agile leaders are not only exceptional at coping with change, but also in driving it, anticipating the markets, or even creating new ones.
- 🌿 They have high tolerance for ambiguity and are actually energised by the possibility of creating something new and different.



Balanced

🌿 Balanced leaders effectively juggle the importance of meeting their business objectives - sales, revenues, margins and cash flow as well as the importance of looking after the needs of their people - committing to their success, motivating their people to be the best they can be and caring for their safety and wellbeing at work.



Communicator

- ❁ Great leaders are great communicators.
- ❁ Regardless of whether you're talking about business, politics, sports or the military, the best leaders are first-rate communicators.
- ❁ Their values are clear and solid, and what they say promotes those values.
- ❁ Their teams admire them and follow their lead.
- ❁ Likewise, if you want your organisation to reach new heights of achievement, you must master the art of clear communication and employee engagement.



Decisive

- ❁ Making decisions is the defining aspect of leadership.
- ❁ There has never been a leader who made only right decisions.
- ❁ An effective decision made at the right moment is far better than no decision at all.
- ❁ A decisive leader carefully weighs the potential effects of each option and chooses the opportunity that works best for his or her organisation.
- ❁ To be decisive, you must also feel comfortable taking responsibility for the results of your decisions.



Energetic

- ✿ Energy, and specifically positive energy, is hugely important for successful leadership.
- ✿ Having a reserve of positive energy has a tremendous impact on your ability to navigate to success with less stress.
- ✿ Positive energy attracts people for better networks and recruitment, motivates and inspires people in your organisation, and enables you to thrive and overcome any obstacles that may come your way throughout the day.



Focussed

- 🌀 Leaders have the potential for numerous distractions.
- 🌀 The tougher the times, the more you have to focus.
- 🌀 Leaders must choose wisely what to focus on and they must judge the context of any situation well enough to decide what to drill down on and what to ignore as background noise.

“Disciplined people who engage in disciplined thought and take disciplined action: this framework captures much of what separates greatness from mediocrity” - Jim Collins, Good to Great



Genuine

- ❧ Effective leaders are honest.
- ❧ Be upfront with your people and trust them enough to communicate openly and authentically together.
- ❧ It's important to build a level of mutual trust within your team so that each person feels comfortable addressing his or her concerns with you.
- ❧ People will very quickly see through leaders that say one thing and do another.



Helping Others

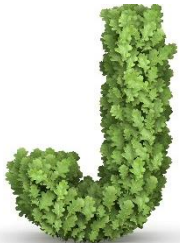
- ❁ Investing in the success of others - your people, your peers and your customers is a quality found in the greatest of leaders.
- ❁ They recognise the importance of investing precious time and energy in supporting growth of other people, helping them to be the best they can be.
- ❁ They see potential in others and want to create opportunities for them to grow and advance, and they seek opportunities to empower them to succeed.





Inspirational

- ❁ Great leaders believe that people determine a organisation's success or failure.
- ❁ It is not the size of the building, how cool the product is, or even the best equipment or process that determines success.
- ❁ What propels and sustains a successful organisation is its diverse team of talented, motivated people.
- ❁ The ability to inspire people to reach great heights of performance and success is a skill that leaders need.
- ❁ Passion, purpose, listening and meaning help make a leader inspirational.
- ❁ The ability to communicate that passion, purpose and meaning to others helps establish the inspirational culture of your organisation.



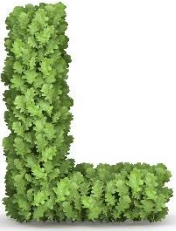
Just

- ❁ Great leaders can be just or fair and still make bold and decisive leadership decisions quickly.
- ❁ Being just is perhaps the trait most noticeable in great leaders and that which separates them from the ordinary, old-fashioned status quo style of leadership.
- ❁ If people perceive a leader to be unjust or subjective in his or her judgment, the inspiration to follow will slow the entire leadership process to a snail's pace.



Knowledgeable

- ❧ Leaders must have a large range of information and knowledge at their disposal.
- ❧ This means they read widely and communicate this knowledge effectively to the people they lead.
- ❧ Great leaders never stop learning about their industry, themselves, their team, and how to best motivate their people.
- ❧ They realise that there is never a point when you know everything; there is always something new to learn.



Listener

- Great leaders understand the 2:1 ratio - two ears and one mouth.
- Leaders don't just give orders. They listen to their team, their customers, their peers, and their competitors because they know it is the best way to understand a situation so they can make the best decision possible.

"We should never pretend to know what we don't know, we should not feel ashamed to ask and learn from people below, and we should listen carefully to the views of the cadres at the lowest levels. Be a pupil before you become a teacher; learn from the cadres at the lower levels before you issue orders."

Mao Tse-tung



Motivated

- ❧ It's possible to teach someone to be a leader, but truly effective leaders are already passionate and motivated about what they do.
- ❧ Your enthusiasm and level of commitment can inspire your team members and motivate them to do better work.
- ❧ Modelling the attitude you want each person to have is one of the most effective ways to lead your team toward a successful destination.



Nurturing

- 🌿 There's a big difference between managing others to success and teaching others to find success themselves.
- 🌿 Great leaders find satisfaction not only in teaching others but also in nurturing them - in showing others how they can become more than they ever believed they could.
- 🌿 These types of leaders have a strong drive to invest in people not for the return it will give them but for the rewards it will bring to people personally



Open

- ❁ Leaders don't always have the answer.
- ❁ They need to understand that they may not always be right and know that at times they will be wrong.
- ❁ It is important to stay open-minded and to consider the views of others.
- ❁ In today's fast-paced, globally hyper-connected business world in which we live, an organisation's successes and failures can be tweeted across the internet in a matter of seconds.
- ❁ A knee jerk reaction of many leaders is to clamp down on the amount of information shared internally, with hopes of minimising risk to the organisation.
- ❁ Many times this backfires and ends up creating a culture of risk aversion and low trust.
- ❁ For organisations to thrive in today's competitive marketplace, leaders have to learn how to build a culture of trust and openness.



Personable

- ❁ Personable leaders are responsive to the needs, feelings and interests of others.
- ❁ They enable, empower and challenge followers.
- ❁ The mutual relationship is equitable and considerate, showing genuine concern for others.
- ❁ These types of transforming leaders provide support, and they are helpful to others, including coaching and mentoring.
- ❁ In addition, because they challenge followers to stretch and take reasonable risks, these leaders are forgiving when efforts do not succeed as expected.



Questioning

- ❖ Leaders question - Even when they think they know the answer.
- ❖ Questions can be used to facilitate discussions.
- ❖ Questions can be asked about how people are feeling about change, what contributed to a recent success, what customers want, how to support diversity, how the world is changing, what might be needed in the future and so on.
- ❖ Questions are also a great way of challenging people to take a fresh look at an issue or problem, and helping them to think about the outcomes they want.





Results Driven

- ❧ Whether you work in a public, private or voluntary organisation, great leaders need to produce results.
- ❧ Whatever leadership role you're in you will have objectives and / or goals that you need to meet to be a success.
- ❧ Ensure you build a good team around you, build and communicate and enrol them in your strategy, set the right objectives, measure and manage performance and be prepared with plan b's and c's to ensure results are achieved.



Strategic

- 🌿 All leaders must set time aside on a regular basis to think about the future - the marketplace of the future, your future customers and their needs, your competitors and what they might be doing and the wider economy.
- 🌿 As we have seen with several UK companies in the recent past - Comet and Blockbusters as well as many others, a failure to anticipate and change at pace, in light of the changing face of the retail marketplace and the ways that consumers purchase, has led to businesses entering into administration and putting tens of thousands of jobs at risk.



Trusted

- ❧ Trust is the cornerstone of a healthy, positive, productive organisational climate.
- ❧ Without trust between leaders and those whom they lead, progress is slowed and even simple processes can become politicised and approached with caution.
- ❧ Risk-taking and innovation, is reduced, and collaboration is rendered difficult or impossible.
- ❧ Within a low trust environment, change is often approached with fear, not curiosity or hope.
- ❧ The actions or behaviours of leaders set the tone for trust within an organisation and once trust is broken it becomes difficult to build again.



Urgency

🌿 As I have said in previous posts, creating a sense of urgency is crucial for leaders engendering change in their teams or organisation.

'Sense of Urgency' by John Kotter is a great read if you want to find out more.





Visionary

Jack Welch said:

“Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion.”

- ❁ Although he talks about business leaders, this leadership characteristic is far-reaching across all dimensions of leadership.
- ❁ Without a vision of where you want to take your organisation and the ability to communicate it effectively, you will struggle to drive any form of significant change or growth



Work-Life Balance



- ❁ Getting a 'Work-Life Balance' is important.
- ❁ All great leaders work hard and sometimes have to put in long hours to deliver results.
- ❁ Working ridiculously long hours on a sustained basis, is not good for you, for your family, for your relationships, for your health, for your productivity and for your people and ultimately your organisation.
- ❁ Find a balance that works for you and stick to it.



X-Factor

In his book, 'Great by Choice' Jim Collins states

"The x-factor of great leadership is not personality, it's humility"

- ❧ Great leaders direct their ego away from themselves to the larger goal of leading their organisation to greatness.
- ❧ The dictionary defines humility as modesty and lacking in pretence, but that doesn't mean humble leaders are meek or timid.
- ❧ A humble leader is secure enough to recognise his or her weaknesses and to seek the input and talents of others.
- ❧ By being receptive to outside ideas and assistance, creative leaders open up new avenues for the organisation and for their people.



Yardstick

As a leader, your behaviours, values and actions will be monitored by your people, whether you like it or not, and they will become the yardstick of measurement for your team or organisation.





Zest for Life

- 🌿 Leaders enjoy what they do.
- 🌿 They get a buzz when they hear of their people's success - a new customer, a great sale, a customer compliment, a team winning an award or someone getting a promotion.
- 🌿 If you don't enjoy what you do and get a thrill from achieving great results, I would suggest it's time for a change!



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