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A Leadership Development Program to Master Five Crucial Skills

What makes a good leader? To be a leader, you must master these five soft skills and work with a mentor to help you develop them.

Leadership is kind of like being pregnant. You can't be a little bit of a leader. You're either a leader or you're not.

A lot has been written on what makes a good leader. Extensive research on proven leaders by Target Training International over a number of years identified five soft skills leaders all have in common. Excellence in leadership includes mastering these skills:

- Interpersonal skills
- Influencing others
- Goal achievement
- Personal accountability
- Self management

Interpersonal Skills

Leaders have mastered the art of relating to and interacting with others. They understand what "makes people tick" by knowing their behavioral and communication styles and values/attitudes. They know what to say and do to motivate individuals.

They know how to develop positive relationships with a diverse range of people. They care about what others say and listen actively. They're not thinking about what they're going to say next when someone is talking. Leaders give feedback, ask questions, and rephrase what people say.

Good interpersonal skills are vital to generate trust and respect for leaders to be effective.

Influencing Others

Leaders have the ability to personally affect other people's actions, decisions, thinking, and opinions. They're masters at building a team that will follow them. They know how to gain commitments from others. Leaders accomplish these things by being trustworthy, ethical, and dependable. People know leaders stand behind what they say and will be there when needed.

Leaders have also mastered presentation skills. They can give a talk on a moment's notice because they are education-focused and have a wealth of knowledge about a variety of subjects.

Goal Achievement

Leaders have a clear vision of what they want to accomplish and do so in a timely manner. They plan strategies to achieve their desired outcomes and have SMART goals:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable

- Realistic
- Timely

Leaders use teamwork to accomplish their goals, capitalizing on the strengths of the individual members of their team. They know how to delegate even when they believe they could do it better themselves.

Leaders are always "on target;" they're constantly adjusting and making course corrections to achieve desired results. They begin with the end in mind.

Personal Accountability

Leaders accept personal responsibility for the consequences of their actions and decisions. They don't play the "blame game," or the "if only game," or the "yeah, but game." They stay committed to their objectives even when they make mistakes or bad decisions.

Leaders lead by example, not by ordering people to follow them. They know that actions, indeed, speak louder than words.

Self Management

You notice we're not saying "time management." Steven Covey said there's no such thing as time management; it's all about self management – what we do with the time we have.

Leaders know how to prioritize and complete tasks to reach their desired outcome. They manage themselves and their activities; they know where they want to go. Leaders are confident of success; they maintain their poise and composure under fire. They stay focused on reaching goals in an efficient, organized, and innovative manner.

Leaders are constantly working on self improvement, reflection, and continual learning.

It's possible to develop these five skills on your own or through training. However, the best way to develop your leadership skills is with a mentor. Ideally, you and your mentor will work through a program specifically designed to help you master these five crucial areas of leadership.

A colleague of mine, Randy Widrick, says, "If you think you're a leader but no one is following, you're just out for a walk."

Discover a mentor-protégé program to help you develop these skills and get a free leadership skills assessment at <http://www.coachannette.com> Annette Estes is a Certified Professional Behavioral and Values Analyst. Order her ebook, "Why Can't You See it My Way?" at <http://www.resolveconflictnow.com> ©2008 Annette Estes. All rights reserved.