

Ten Essential Qualities for Visionary Leaders

Leadership requires the ability to make others respect you and believe in your vision. Leadership is an attitude and a state of mind. Here are leadership characteristics that anyone can incorporate into your coaching life.

1) Leaders have the authority of knowledge. To be a leader, you can't just be a talker. You need to demonstrate that you are deeply involved in whatever you do. You must also bring something special to the party - something that will make other people's jobs easier. You must have some coaching talents that set you apart from your peers.

2) Leaders are visionaries. They are able to see facts and ideas that others view as ordinary and rearrange them so that they become extraordinary. Leaders form visions that draw simplicity out of complexity and clarity out of obscurity. By simplifying what is complex, leaders make patterns emerge that become the inspiration for their visions.

How can you become a visionary? By developing the ability to step back from your immediate context. Visionaries can elevate themselves above the minutiae and rearrange all the available facts into a larger whole.

Example: When you're in a crowd, all you can see is what is immediately around you - one person's shoulder and another person's back. But from a helicopter high above the crowd, you can see all the people and buildings. You can see everything from a new perspective.

3) Leaders produce change. They are not disoriented by change and don't run from change. They see change not as a threat but as an opportunity and a challenge.

Leaders are able to master change because they have already experienced and managed painful change within their own lives. We have all experienced such events. They range from universal episodes, like passing through adolescence or losing a job we loved to tragic episodes, like surviving a serious illness or dealing with the death of a loved one.

Leaders emerge from these events with a sense of clarity, a feeling of renewal and a need to ask, 'Why do things work the way they do?' A visionary leader has the ability to emerge from trauma with the capacity to cope creatively.

4) Leaders give their all. They are willing to commit themselves to their visions and their success. Leaders do not hold back. They do not conditionally dedicate themselves to the success of their visions and let themselves become sidetracked...they completely dedicate themselves. Tapping their reservoirs of passion gives leaders the energy to transform the present into a more successful and promising future.

5) Leaders are good listeners. They are able to hear what others are saying about the problems that accompany change. They accommodate the difficulty others experience in the pursuit of that vision. It is one thing to have a vision and another to empower other people to follow your vision. That doesn't mean the road toward the vision will be smooth.

6) Leaders are good communicators. They are clear, concise, complete and consistent. Good leaders are able to deliver the messages they want to deliver--and deliver them with enthusiasm and sincerity.

7) Leaders are students. They never stop learning and growing. They study the process and are willing to learn from their mistakes. Most people say they learn from their mistakes, but most repeat the same mistakes their entire lives.

Leaders are always thirsty for knowledge, and they seek it from the wisdom of today as well as from the wisdom of the past. Today's problems are so complex that solving them *requires* as many points of view as possible integrated into the solution. *How can you gain this knowledge?* You read and study. You listen to great people who have achieved success in your field. You take time to think. You read biographies of great leaders in history.

8) Leaders take risks. They create change, which requires risks. They are willing to take risks because they can visualize how things can be done better. The most important risk is the willingness to expose yourself to the possibility of a negative outcome in order to carry out your vision. Risk does not mean betting on long shots. In order to be a risk-taker, one needs some record of success. People will not take risks if they fail repeatedly.

9) Leaders are ethical. People will not follow you if they don't trust you. People may follow you in the short run because you con them into doing so. But in the long run, you will get caught.

10) Leaders are optimists. They have hope. They trust their gut feelings and other people. That trust and hope are the basis on which leaders empower others.