

BUSINESS INSIGHT

Strategies for success



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Great things that great leaders do

Roxana Hewertson, president and CEO of the Highland Consulting Group in Trumansburg, N.Y., says the best leaders develop emotional intelligence and are always looking for solutions without the need to take credit for successes.

Describe common strategies of successful leaders

They think and act with optimism. There are two primary attitudes people demonstrate — those who think and act through the lens of abundance, and those who think and act through a lens of scarcity. Great leaders think abundantly, looking for solutions, new ideas and silver linings, even in the worst of times. They may change course, but they never give up. Successful leaders see and seize opportunities for contributing to the greater good. Despite conventional thinking, great leaders have low ego needs and exhibit an attitude of genu-

ine humility. By not wasting time and energy shining up their image, these leaders free up energy to create something greater than themselves for the greater good. Successful leaders demonstrate a solid sense of self-worth and capability. There is a big divide between an attitude of confidence and one of arrogance. Confidence comes from a strong sense of self-worth and self-awareness. Arrogance comes from fear in many cases and a sense of entitlement.

Other attributes?

Good leaders understand their own emotions, and recognize the impact on themselves and others. By developing an accurate view of, and managing one's own emotional responses to situations — and the ways in which one impacts others — the rest of the leader's skills and talents are magnified and leveraged. Good

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leaders know their strengths and limitations. The best leaders understand they can never know and do everything, and don't pretend they can. Instead, they leverage their skills and surround themselves with people who are smarter and more experienced in areas of their personal gaps. Good leaders consistently live their values. These leaders are grounded and centered, particularly under pressure. A sure sign of this quality is when others say, "I always know and respect where she or he stands, even if I disagree."

And poor leaders?

They lack empathy. Failing leaders don't pick up on or value others' signals. Or, if they do, they don't care, demonstrating a fundamental lack of empathy. One cannot be a good leader without empathy, period. These people do not play well with others. Poor

leaders miss key organizational clues. These leaders landed a leadership title because they were good at some other skill set or by accident or favoritism. They have little self-awareness or organizational awareness. They have "organizational blindness." They don't get it, don't buy it and don't know how to play the game in their particular sandbox. They blame others for poor outcomes. Failing leaders don't ask, they tell. They need to make someone wrong to be right. Holding people accountable for their performances is important, but blaming them for mistakes or failures is a non-starter. Poor leaders avoid dealing with and resolving conflicts. Often conflict grows exponentially until it's a toxic, smelly mess. Even the nicest leader will lose the respect of colleagues and the boss if they cannot or will not clean up their own messes and effectively sort out problematic issues. Poor leaders isolate themselves or their teams from others in the organization. They rarely share resources or knowledge. Failing leaders divide and try to conquer.

How can leaders become better at leading?

Most leaders can learn, develop and increase their skills if motivated to do so. It takes willingness, awareness, focus, assessment, self-motivation, learning, feedback and practice — over and over again. Improving one's emotional intelligence and leadership skill set is critical to success, and it is a lifelong journey, one that great leaders understand and relish.

—Dawn House

