

What are you trying to achieve by being a great leader?

Your reputation as a leader is your most valuable asset. By being a great leader, your people will trust you, your people will feel able to approach you and talk with you and finally, your people will follow you. You get it right, they will deliver for you, your team and the organisation.

A great leader will handle a challenge or change in their business well and by doing so, they could prosper greatly. Handle it poorly and you put yourself and your business at risk. Some of the most commonly cited great leaders include Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Queen Victoria, Abraham Lincoln, Rosa Parks, Winston Churchill and Joan of Arc, While these men and women were very different and often held different political beliefs or aims, they were all deemed to be great leaders, so will have shared some key characteristics. Here are just some of them.

Let's start with trust. The foundation of leadership

Certain communication traits make it easier for people to trust you. Communicating with honesty clarifies your motives. Communicating with consistency makes you predictable. Both read as trustworthy because your people know where you stand and what to expect. That doesn't mean you can't admit uncertainty, concerns or errors. People aren't looking to follow a robot. And communicating your doubts and mistakes invites your people to admit their own, which further encourages a 'just' culture. More on this later.

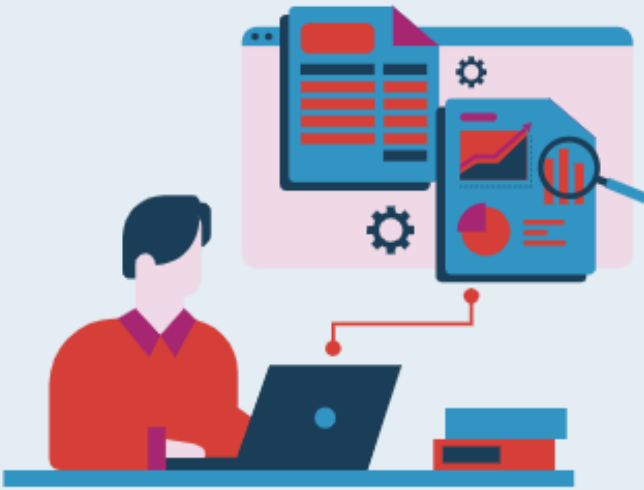
There are greater rewards for trustworthy leaders: A recent Gallup analysis shows that when followers strongly agree that they trust their leaders, one in two are engaged; when followers don't find leaders trustworthy, only one in 12 are engaged.



Next is compassion. If you care about the work, you must care about the worker

Again, in the same Gallup analysis it learnt that when employees talk about their leaders' compassion, the words they use most often are "caring," "friendship," and "happiness". Strong words. When your team members use them, they're saying you listen and you care... and because you care, they care about you and the organisation. Compassion reciprocates. That may be why employees who strongly agree that their "supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about them as a person" are likely to be advocates for their employer and support their team members personally and professionally.

Accepting accountability



A great leader knows that they cannot do everything by themselves. They will need to delegate to their team around them. They will know their team, what their skills and capabilities are and how much they can handle. They trust their team. However, they are also willing to answer for the outcomes of their decisions, their actions and behaviours in all situations. Accountable leaders do not blame others when things go wrong, instead they assume ownership for the performance of their teams and make things right.

Equally, when things go right, accountable leaders will stand at the back of the room, they will not take the praise but rather pass on the praise to their team. Accepting accountability is an essential aspect of personal and professional integrity, as it demonstrates honesty, reliability, and a commitment to their role.

How comfortable are you with being challenged? Really.

Poor leaders don't want to be challenged by their employees – and can't handle being wrong - good leaders want to be challenged, whilst great leaders create a culture where they encourage and promote people to challenge one another. Being challenged by your people with great ideas for doing things better is the recipe for long term success. A great leaders' team will feel confident enough to challenge the status quo with new ideas and new thinking about ways of executing the strategy and achieving business results. They want to feel and be part of the solution.

The power of hope. Hope imagines the future

You can't underestimate the power of hope. People can only strive, aspire and change if they have hope that the future can be better than the present. That belief has a profound effect: A Gallup study found that 69% of followers who strongly agreed that their leaders made them "feel enthusiastic about the future" were engaged.

But that future needs your direction. So, detail the bright future you're working toward, socialise your plans and outline your strategies to bring that future to life. Describe what will it mean to your team. Acknowledge difficulties while communicating the best possible outcomes.

Give hope. It's shockingly effective.

Creating a 'Just' culture

Leaders need to create a culture within which their people will feel fairly and appropriately treated. Creating a culture in which people can openly admit to making mistakes without fear of unfair retribution is vital if lessons are to be learnt and improvements are to be made. Failure to achieve this makes people hide mistakes, avoid responsibility and miss the opportunities to learn from errors and for others to learn from them too.