



## Timeless Leadership Principles

There are fundamental truths about leadership that have stood the test of time. These leadership principles were developed from a 1948 Leadership study, and they are just as valid today as they were then. Use these principles to assess yourself and develop an action plan to improve your ability to lead.

1. Know yourself and seek self-improvement - understand who you are, your values, priorities, strengths and weaknesses. Knowing yourself allows you to discover your strengths and weaknesses. Self-improvement is a process of sustaining strengths and overcoming weaknesses, thus increasing competence and the confidence people have in your leadership ability.
2. Be technically proficient - before leaders can lead effectively, they must have mastered the tasks required by the people they lead. In addition, leaders train their people to do their own jobs while understudying the leader so that they are prepared to replace the leader if necessary. Likewise, leaders must understudy their leader in the event they must assume those duties.
3. Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions - leading always involves responsibility. Leaders want people who can handle responsibility and help achieve goals. They expect others to take the initiative within their stated intent. When you see a problem or something that needs to be fixed, do not wait to be told to act. Organizational effectiveness depends upon having leaders at all levels that exercise initiative, are resourceful and take opportunities that will lead to goal accomplishment and business success. When leaders make mistakes, they accept just criticism and take corrective action. They do not avoid responsibility by placing the blame on someone else.
4. Set the example - people want and need their leaders to be role models. This is a heavy responsibility, but leaders have no choice. No aspect of leadership is more powerful. If leaders expect courage, responsibility, initiative, competence, commitment and integrity from their direct reports, they must demonstrate them. People will imitate a leader's behavior. Leaders set high but attainable standards for performance and are willing to do what they require of their people. Leaders share hardships with their people and know that their personal example affects behavior more than any amount of instruction or form of discipline.



5. Know your people and look out for their welfare - it is not enough to know the names and birth dates of your people. You need to understand what motivates them and what is important to them. Commit time and effort to listen to and learn about them. Showing genuine concern for your people builds trust and respect for you as a leader. Telling your people you care about them has no meaning unless they see you demonstrating it. They assume that if you fail to care for them daily, you will fail them when the going gets tough.
6. Keep your people informed - people do best when they know why they are doing something. Individuals affect the bottom line results of companies by using initiative in the absence of instructions. Keeping people informed helps them make decisions and execute plans within your intent, encourages initiative, improves teamwork and enhances morale.
7. Ensure the task is understood, supervised, and accomplished - your people must understand what you want done, to what standard and by when. They need to know if you want a task accomplished in a specific way or how much leeway is allowed. Supervising lets you know if people understand your instructions; it shows your interest in them and in goal accomplishment. Over-supervision causes resentment while under-supervision causes frustration. When people are learning new tasks tell them what you want done and show them how. Let them try. Observe their performance. Reward performance that exceeds expectations; correct performance that does not. Determine the cause of the poor performance and take appropriate action. When you hold people accountable for their performance, they realize they are responsible for accomplishing goals as individuals and as teams.
8. Develop a sense of responsibility among your people - people feel a sense of pride and responsibility when they successfully accomplish a new task. Delegation indicates trust in people and encourages them to seek responsibility. Develop people by giving them challenges and opportunities that stretch them and more responsibility when they demonstrate they are ready. Their initiative will amaze you.
9. Train your people as a team - teamwork is becoming more and more crucial to achieving goals. Teamwork is possible only when people have trust and respect for their leader and for each other as competent professionals and see the importance of their contributions to the organization. Develop a team spirit among people to motivate them to perform willingly and confidently. Ensure that individuals know their roles and responsibilities within the team framework. Train and cross train people until they are confident in the team's abilities.



10. Make sound and timely decisions - leaders must assess situations rapidly and make sound decisions. They need to know when to make decisions themselves, when to consult with people before deciding and when to delegate the decision. Leaders must know the factors to consider when deciding how, when and if to make decisions. Good decisions made at the right time are better than the best decisions made too late. Do not delay or try to avoid a decision when one is necessary. Indecisive leaders create hesitancy, loss of confidence and confusion. Leaders must anticipate and reason under the most trying conditions and quickly decide what actions to take. Gather essential information before making decisions. Announce decisions in time for people to react.
11. Employ your work unit in accordance with its capabilities - leaders must know their work unit's capabilities and limitations. People gain satisfaction from performing tasks that are reasonable and challenging but are frustrated if tasks are too easy, unrealistic or unattainable. If the task assigned is one that people have not been trained to do, failure is very likely to result.