

Your No-Nonsense Guide to **Effective Leadership Skills**



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Your No-Nonsense Guide to Effective Leadership Skills



Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it's amazing what they can accomplish.

~[Sam Walton](#)

What makes someone a good leader?

It's really a simple question but can sometimes be difficult to answer. A good leader is more than a manager. Being a good leader has nothing to do with your seniority level, your title or your personality.

Having good leadership skills isn't necessarily something you are born with, either. They can be learned.

What exactly, is the definition of leadership?

In his book *Leadership: The Successful Leader- Maximize Your Potential and Lead Like You Were Born To!*, Steve Williams defined leadership this way:

"The truth is, when you are a true leader, you will be involved in the activity, each person you are leading will be in the best position according to their skills and talents, and you will not have to tell people what to do or micromanage, because they will be following your lead."

Leadership is a process of persuasion. You lead by earning the trust and following of others by demonstrating and showing interest in their well-being.

Effective leadership is a skill you can learn. And there is more than one type of leadership style. Building effective leadership skills depends on many different factors besides who you are trying to lead.

In this no-nonsense guide, you will discover:

- The best methods for developing effective leadership skills
- The different types of leadership forms
- The qualities it takes for effective leadership
- What makes a poor leader
- How you can avoid the mistakes that cause poor leadership
- How to find your leadership style and when or how to change yours if necessary
- Ways to incorporate quality leadership skills into your everyday life
- And finally the best to ways to communicate as a leader.

Ready?

Let's get started.

Types of Leadership Styles



Before we get into finding your leadership style, let's look at a few of the most widely used methods for leadership style categories and examples of each. Then, we'll move on to how you can sort through them and discover the best leadership style for you and your situation.

1. The first category comes from famed social psychologist Kurt Lewin. He identified three leadership styles:
 - a. **Autocratic leadership** makes decisions without consulting team members. They emphasize following rules. It's useful when quick decisions need to be made, such as in an emergency. This type of leadership is ineffective and hurts morale.
 - b. **Democratic leadership** seeks out input from other team members, encourages creativity and values the team members' individual skills and knowledge. This type of leadership leads to high productivity and job satisfaction.
 - c. **Laissez-faire leadership** lets team members make decisions without direct or very little supervision. The laissez-faire leader trusts his team members and

doesn't need to monitor activities. This is a good style when employees are highly experienced and need little direction.

2. The next category grouping comes from psychologist and author Daniel Goleman. He identified 5 more styles:
 - a. **Coercive** leadership style demands immediate compliance with any orders given. They make the decisions alone and team members are expected to follow them without any comments. This style is effective in times of emergencies.
 - b. **Visionary** leaders inspire their followers to strive for something better. He moves people to work toward a goal that benefits everyone. This style is effective when change is needed.
 - c. **Affiliative** leaders create emotional bonds and harmony with their team members. The leader wants their followers to feel like the organization is part of their lives instead of just a job. This type is good at boosting morale, but needs to be used with other styles to effective.
 - d. **Coaching** style is more like a teacher than a boss. The coaching leader guides their team to develop themselves for success in their work and personal lives. This style of leadership is good when working with new or less experienced employees while they gain experience.
 - e. **Pacesetting** leaders focus on excellence in work and expect the same from all other members of the team. This style works when the team is already motivated to accomplish the goal. Overuse leads to burnout and exhaustion in many employees.

As you can see leadership styles vary greatly depending on the needs of the project or team. Each one has a place but each one on their own may not be as effective as a combination of two or more.

Do You Have the Qualities of an Effective Leader?



Leadership isn't an easy endeavor. There are good times, stressful times and times when it seems everyone is against you. But, great leaders will always be able to lead their team to a successful end, no matter what the situation is. Just because you are a leader, though, doesn't mean you are a good one. An effective leader is one who lets other people develop and shine while working for the end goal.

Do you have the qualities it takes to be an effective leader?

- **Honesty.** Just as the foundation in a personal relationship is honesty, it is necessary in leadership, as well. Team members want to work with and for someone they can trust. A leader needs to have morals, values and integrity when dealing with team members.
- **Clear Communication.** Followers need to understand clearly your goals and what you want from them. Consistent communication is necessary for establishing good work, constructive feedback and when training new members.
- **Confidence.** An effective leader has the confidence to lead through difficult situations. They must appear calm, confident and set a good example to those they are leading.
- **Inspiring.** Effective leaders are inspired by their business and pass that inspiration on to their team members. The leader inspires them to succeed and do their best in everything they do.
- **Positive attitude.** An effective leader stays positive in any situation. Staying positive sets the tone for the work attitude, which directly affects those you are leading. Showing interest in their personal lives and giving compliments are both forms of positivity that have a significant impact on their work.
- **Decisive.** Effective leaders make decisions that impact the people they lead and the company. People follow someone who weighs all the options and does what is right for the company and the people involved.

- **Conscientious.** A good leader is organized, compassionate and thoughtful, all components of conscientiousness. They sympathize with their followers and provide support and feedback when needed.
- **Sense of Humor.** A leader with a sense of humor goes a long way in helping to create a positive work environment. It builds a sense of camaraderie among team members and leaders.
- **Creative.** When decisions need to be made quickly, an effective leader thinks outside the box for a solution. Team members look to their leader for guidance in situations that call for unexpected decisions.
- **Open.** Effective leaders encourage their team members to share ideas and allow each one be valued. They're open to others' ideas and encourage these traits in others.

An effective leader has many qualities. Some are a part of your personality, while others are skills learned. Either way, a good leader needs to develop many of these qualities in order to be an effective leader.

7 Signs You Might Be a Poor Leader

Now that you know what qualities it takes to be an effective leader, you need to know the signs of a poor leader.

You can find loads of information on what makes a great leader. But have you ever thought about what makes a poor leader? You know, that one you worked for? What about them made them a poor leader?

Here are 7 signs that might raise the red flag to someone being a poor leader.

1. Leaders who cannot embrace change are likely to be stuck in a rut. They rule by the same old way.
2. They lack empathy for others. They can't put themselves in another person's shoes and see things from a different perspective.
3. The leader who simply orders around won't create loyalty or make those under their leadership feel empowered. Being bossy is not a sign of a good boss.
4. Being wishy-washy when it comes to making decisions indicates a lack of self-confidence. Those under you will pick up on this quickly and lose confidence in your ability to lead them.
5. Having poor judge of character is a poor leadership trait. If you have a blind spot when it comes to your friends or coworkers and make excuses or can't see their true character, it gives others the impression of you being unfair and single minded.
6. A lack of balance between your personal and business life can lead to burnout and signal you may make unreasonable demands on the team.
7. Not having any humility is a sign of a poor leader. Micro-managers who act as if they can do it all or are the only one who can do it right won't inspire others to follow their lead.

I'm not saying having one of these attributes will automatically make you a poor leader. What I am saying is that you can beat any of these habits and build better skills to be an effective leader.

The point is that if you have more than one or two traits on this list, you might not be ready to lead others yet. Work on changing them and improving yourself first.

How to Avoid These Common Leadership Mistakes

As you can see, even if you have poor qualities, you can still become an effective leader with work. That doesn't mean you won't make mistakes as a leader, though. Ask any good leader if they've ever made a management mistake and you'll hear many say they've made their fair share.

The trick is, though, to learn and grow from the mistake. Of course the best course is to avoid making a valuable mistake in the first place.

Here are some common mistakes to look out for:

- Assuming every team member is well-trained and self-motivated and will ask for help if they need it. Everyone needs assistance or guidance from time to time. Don't wait for your team members to come to you when they need help. Check in with them periodically.
- Not scheduling catch-up meetings is a mistake an ineffective leader might make. Schedule regular times to get together with your team as a group or individually to make sure things are moving along as needed.
- Letting your temper get the best of you in the presence of your team. Wild emotional swings give your team the impression you might not be open to communication and they never know which version of you they are going to be dealing with. Keep your temper in check at all times. If you have to, walk away from the situation for a few minutes while you collect yourself.
- Not asking for help when you need it. There are always resources for leaders to tap into, such as free consultations from experienced peers. Asking for help is a sign of a good leader who knows when they need help.
- Failing to acknowledge when you make a mistake is a sign of a poor leader. Instead, own up to your mistake, share your mistakes with your team if necessary, and learn from them.

Everyone makes mistakes and being an effective leader means learning from the mistakes of others before you. Many mistakes can be avoided by paying attention to your team and what is happening among your members, communicating regularly and asking for help from your peers if you get stuck.

How To Find Your Leadership Style



What's your leadership style? Do you even know? How does it compare to other leaders' style?

Do you lead like Gandhi or Steve Jobs? Or are you rigid or creative? Do you put people or goals first?

There are many ways to find your leadership style. One way is to take an assessment test. There are several websites online that offer leadership style tests, like the one at [this site](http://psychology.about.com/library/quiz/bl-leadershipquiz.htm) (source: <http://psychology.about.com/library/quiz/bl-leadershipquiz.htm>)

You'll need to ask yourself a few questions when you're finding your own leadership style.

Here's a sample of questions to ask yourself to get you started:

- I like to have power and control.
- I listen to others, but I want to have the final say.
- I am not an expert in every area of my business.
- I don't care what others think. I am going to do what is best for me.
- I like the decision-making to be shared.
- I prefer my followers to be in control.
- I micromanage.
- I am not afraid to recognize achievement in others.
- I believe group members need to create their own goals.
- I have trouble trusting my employees.
- I like to encourage my team members to collaborate.
- I encourage group members to solve problems.
- I think employees should do only what they're told.
- I want my business to run through teams.

- I am not good at following up with team members.
- I want the final decision on how to fix problems.
- I enjoy helping my employees grow and learn.
- I give very little input because my employees know their jobs better than I do.
- I don't want to make time for employee input.
- I prefer to hear the opinions of my employees.
- I like being in charge.
- Mistakes are not acceptable.
- When things go wrong, I am willing to ask for advice from team members.

There are different styles of leaders. Depending on what your answers are to certain questions will determine the type of leader you are.

Authoritarian leaders know exactly what they want done. They know who they want to do it and when it needs to be completed. They don't allow for much variance.

Democratic leaders are the encouragers. They encourage team members to take part in decision making.

Delegative leaders or laissez faire leaders trust their employees and have confidence that team members are educated and experienced enough to get the job done without much interference from the leader.

As you consider each statement and ask yourself the questions, you'll begin to see a pattern of how you lead. Once you know your style, you can work on changing what needs to be changed.

When Should Your Leadership Style Change?

But how do you know when your leadership style needs updated? It might be when a new task arrives that calls for different team members or when your responsibilities shift.

You may need to change your leadership style when the company itself changes. Other reasons for change may include the fact that the needs of the project have changed and grown. Another reason why you should change your leadership style is that the one you are using is ineffective.

The first thing you need to determine is the reason for the change. Once you've done that, you need to determine what the right style would be. These might include:

Directive leader where you are focused on the task and emphasize a set schedule. This style is commanding and inflexible.

A **supportive leader** is friendly and has an open communication policy. You form relationships with your subordinates.

Participative leaders allow team members to make some of the decisions and ask for their opinions.

An **achievement-oriented leader** is one who set difficult goals. This style expects team members to be top performers.

Visionary leadership style creates vision and direction. They know team members' commitment must be earned.

A **pace-setting style** is one where the leader is a strong role model and demonstrates standards. Pace setters do the work as well as lead others.

Coaching leadership style uses coaching to help others advance their skills and create positive work environment. They ask questions and guide the team members to find answers.

An **affiliative leader** creates harmony and builds good relationships. They provide regular feedback.

Democratic leaders share the problem with relevant team members to come up with solutions and alternatives.

There will be times you need to change the way you are leading others. It can be as simple as the members of the team are inexperienced and need a different type of leadership. Determining when you should change your leadership style will help you be an effective leader and stay in tune with what your project and business needs are.

Incorporate Leadership Quality Into Your Daily Routine

Effective leadership skills aren't something you use once in a while. They are daily habits.

Adopting these habits into your daily routine can help you improve your leadership skills.

- Continue to learn something new. It might be a course you take or a podcast you listen to. It could be learning from your mentors and peers or from books. It doesn't matter how you learn, as long as you spend time every day learning something.
- Have a routine. It doesn't have to be set in stone but it should be as consistent as possible. A routine helps you stay better focused on demanding tasks.
- Smile and be approachable. A good leader has a positive and happy attitude.
- Have casual conversations with everyone you work with. Make connections with others that help you build relationships.
- Ask questions. Listen intently to the answers.
- Act on constructive feedback about your leadership style.

- Focus on what really matters. Set goals and work on them daily.
- Recognize when you are being indecisive. And then make a decision.
- Spend time with people outside your own demographic group as well as with other companies.

Incorporating these daily leadership qualities into your daily routine affects how well you can implement them as a leader.

Communication Tips for Effective Leaders

Communication is key in any business and project. It starts at the top and filters down through each team member. Expecting your team members to be mind readers and to know what you want from them without actually telling them is a sign of poor communication.

To excel as an effective leader, you need to master the following skills:

- ✓ Being specific, clear and concise. You need to give specific times or instructions. Instead of saying “as soon as possible”, give the team member a specific time you want something finished. Take time to organize your thoughts and deliverables into clear and concise instructions.
- ✓ Practice good digital etiquette. Before hitting the send button, read over your message a few times to make sure it’s professional with no spelling errors and that it’s clear and specific. Schedule a follow-up meeting or message to make sure your message was received as intended.
- ✓ Be aware of your body language. This includes your facial expressions, posture, how close you are standing to someone and your eye movement. Are your arms crossed? Or are your hands fisted even though you’re smiling? Are you leaning in towards the other person?
- ✓ Be aware of the message you are giving with your body language. Body language includes facial expressions, posture, eye movement, and your position in relation to the person with whom you are speaking.

- ✓ Don't overreact. It's uncomfortable being put on the spot, so take your time to consider your responses before opening your mouth. If you need to, say "Let me think about that and I will get back to you."
- ✓ Listening is a crucial part of communication. Hearing is not the same as listening. We might hear what the other person is saying but not really listen. Listening means focusing all your attention on the person speaking. By becoming a better listener, you will improve your productivity, as well as your ability to influence, negotiate and persuade others. You'll also avoid conflict and misunderstandings.

Building good communication skills is essential for effective leadership and for the project to succeed. The next time you need to communicate with team members, or anyone for that matter, remember to be clear, concise, to actively listen and to be aware of your body language.

The Next Step

As you can see, being a leader is more than just managing others. It's a lot deeper and requires more skill than micromanaging. Leadership is a hot topic in the business world.

What distinguishes effective leaders from mediocre ones?

Although a lot of effective leadership skills are common sense, most of the skills can be learned. You can develop good listening and communication skills by working on them every day. The same can be said for many of the other qualities of an effective leader.

Effective leaders know what type of leadership style their team or project calls for. They are decisive but have a sense of humor and are creative. They spend time getting to know their team members.

The first thing for you to do when determining your leadership style is to decide on what the project calls for. Is it for experienced workers who need very little supervision? Or are the team members new and inexperienced? Have you built a relationship with the team members or is everyone new?

Building effective leadership skills takes working on every day. Mistakes happen, but if you learn from those mistakes, you can grow and become a better leader.

Related Info Products

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Effective Leadership Skills Brainstorming Sheet

This worksheet helps you brainstorm the ways you can help identify your leadership style and how to use your skills to develop those around you.

I believe my leadership style is:

My natural leadership style includes the following attributes (ex. good listening skills):

Identify how you would lead in a particular situation:

- When assigning tasks, I consider people's skills and interests. _____
- I expect nothing less than top-notch results from people. _____
- I expect my people to work harder than I do. _____
- When someone is upset, I try to understand how he or she is feeling. (compassion)

- I think that personal feelings shouldn't be allowed to get in the way of performance and productivity.

- Time spent worrying about team morale is time that's wasted.

- My actions show people what I want from them.

- When working with a team, I encourage everyone to work toward the same overall objectives.

- I make exceptions to my rules and expectations – it's easier than being the enforcer all the time!

- I make time to learn what people need from me, so that they can be successful.

- I'm optimistic about life, and I can see beyond temporary setbacks and problems.

-
- I listen to others, but I want to have the final say. _____
 - I am not an expert in every area of my business. _____
 - I micromanage. _____
 - I am not afraid to recognize achievement in others. _____
 - I believe group members need to create their own goals. _____
 - I have trouble trusting my employees. _____
 - I encourage group members to solve problems. _____
 - I want my business to run through teams. _____
 - I am not good at following up with team members. _____
 - I want the final decision on how to fix problems. _____
 - I enjoy helping my employees grow and learn. _____
 - I give very little input because my employees know their jobs better than I do.

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- I don't want to make time for employee input. _____
 - Mistakes are not acceptable. _____
 - I think that teams perform best when individuals keep doing the same tasks and perfecting them, instead of learning new skills and challenging themselves.

Which Type of Leadership Style Are You?

- **Autocratic leadership** makes decisions without consulting team members..
- **Democratic leadership** values the team members' individual skills and knowledge.
- **Laissez-faire leadership** lets team members make decisions without direct supervision.
- **Coercive** demands immediate compliance with any orders given.
- **Visionary** inspires their followers to strive for something better.
- **Affiliatives** create emotional bonds and harmony with their team members.
- **Coaching** style is more like a teacher than a boss.
- **Pacesetting** leaders focus on excellence in work and expect the same from their team.

I have the following leadership qualities:

- Able to motivate & direct others

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- Take responsibility for the direction & actions of a team. _____
 - Can set objectives. _____
 - Organize & motivate others. _____
 - Take the initiative _____
 - Persevere when things are going wrong _____
 - Have a positive attitude toward frustration/failure. _____

- Accept responsibility for mistakes and wrong decisions. _____
- Am flexible. I'm prepared to adapt the goals in changing situations. _____

Any other key points I need to be an effective leader?

Do I Have these Poor Qualities of A Leader That I Need to Change?

I have difficulty embracing change. _____

I lack empathy for others. I can't put myself in another person's shoes and see things from a different perspective.

I am bossy. I like to give orders. _____

I am wishy-washy. I have trouble making decisions. _____

I am a poor judge of character. _____

I lack a balance between my personal and business life. _____

I am a micromanager, thinking I have to do it all myself. _____

Incorporating Quality Skills in Daily Routine

What are some of the ways I can build and use my quality leadership skills in my daily routine?

- Do I continue to learn something new every day? Do I take a course or listen to a new podcast? Am I learning from my peers and mentors? From books?
- Do I have a set routine? Is it consistent but still flexible?
- Have I smiled and shown that I am approachable? Do I have a positive and happy attitude?
- Do I have casual conversations with everyone I work with? Am I making connections with others that help me build solid relationships?
- Do I ask questions and listen intently to the answers?
- When I receive constructive feedback about my leadership style, do I act on it?
- Am I focusing daily on what really matters? Am I focusing on the goals I have set for the team and myself?
- Do I recognize when I'm being indecisive?
- Do I spend time with people outside my own demographic group as well as with other companies?

I have found these ways to incorporate effective leadership qualities into my daily routine.

Communication Tips for Effective Leaders

Communication is key in any business and project. It starts at the top and filters down through each team member.

To excel as an effective leader, I need to master the following skills:

- Am I always being specific, clear and concise by giving specific times or instructions?

- Do I always practice good digital etiquette? I read over messages before sending them. _____
- I am aware of my body language whenever communicating with others. This includes facial, body and eyes like

- I practice patience. I don't overreact. _____
- I am really listening to what the other person is saying.

Other ways of communication I can improve on: