

## **Ingredients of Leadership**

This abstract is taken from an article I wrote which was published in Upstate Indiana, July 2008.

Do you possess the qualities that all great leaders share?

We live in a time when the world craves leadership. Our current political climate is a manifestation of our cravings. We hunger for leaders who possess a compassionate, solution-focused vision, with the power to unite, heal, inspire, and transform. A study of great leaders of history can provide insights into the ingredients of successful leadership. Here are three of the top qualities shared by successful leaders.

**1. All successful leaders are lifelong learners.** For them, learning doesn't begin or end with school. No matter where they go, what they are doing, or who they are with, they are always learning. Great leaders know that learning is an attitude; it is a recognition that you can never know too much, and the more you learn, the more there is to know. Through formal and informal means, they continue to educate themselves. For true leaders, learning is as automatic as breathing.

All successful leaders know that learning must occur at multiple levels. For example, they know they must learn about people--what makes them tick and why they do what they do. They recognize people as their greatest asset and the importance of understanding them. They become lifelong students of human motivation and interpersonal dynamics. (See my Interpersonal Power Program for business leaders; an eight week course on human motivation and relationship dynamics. This program provides business owners and entrepreneurs a foundation for understanding human behavior.)

On an entirely different level, great leaders seek to learn everything they can about the goals, obstacles, policies, and processes that govern the system and organizations they lead. By firmly understanding policies and processes, they are able to define concrete measures of performance that will provide the accurate and ongoing feedback necessary to move their organization forward. This leads to greater vision and a structure for achieving that vision.

Another level...great leaders are a student of history. Past successes and failures provide a tremendous opportunity for learning. Mistakes aren't something to be avoided, they are fertile ground for growth and opportunity.

Leaders are also avid readers. They know that books provide access to wisdom and the greatest minds of the ages. They expand their consciousness and creativity through reading. Teddy Roosevelt was known to read a book a day. Oprah has been heard to say..."It all started because I was a good reader."

**2. All successful leaders are tenacious.** They know how to persevere in the face of adversity and disappointment. Life holds no shortage of upsets, failures, disputes, and adversity. Great leaders accept this fact. They don't complain about it or fight it. They accept the fact that feelings of inadequacy come with any challenge. They see it as a call to growth and they rise to the challenge.

Leaders don't give much attention to naysayers. They maintain their focus on what they can control and what they need to learn. They stay action oriented and strategically proactive, without a need to impress everyone. As Robert Kiyosaki puts it..."Your income will be the average of the five people you hang around the most."

**3. All successful leaders work to bring out the best in those they lead.** Leadership is about accomplishing goals. This requires leaders to develop and capitalize on the skills and talents of those they lead. Great leaders know how to see and expand the potential of those around them. They know that great visions have room for multiple leaders. To help bring out the best in others, leaders rely extensively on recognition. They know that praise and recognition is the #1 motivator of human behavior. The attitude "Why praise someone for work they are being paid to do" is not part of a great leader's repertoire. They don't think that way!

When working with my leadership coaching clients, I often use the DCS-21. I developed this list of 21 character strengths drawn from scriptures (Divine Character Strengths). Exploring this list allows you to recognize strengths within yourself and bring out the strengths in others. This list is on my website.

This is just a taste of the ingredients needed for masterful leadership. How about you? Do you seek out opportunities to learn and grow? Are you currently stretching beyond your comfort zone? Life is an ongoing adventure in learning--never stop growing!