



Developing Leadership Skills

Every manager is a leader, whether in any specialized area leading strategic direction of their organization or leading the whole organization. The leaders of all organizations are expected to be role models, be visible champions of high standards of professional and ethical behavior; be leaders of whom organizations can be proud of, and competitors are envious of.

Not many of these characteristics are imbued in our leaders by default, but they could be learned, and should then be continuously developed and enhanced.

Looking at personal attributes, the key to effective leadership is the person that has the right blend of knowledge, expertise, and competencies. These are encapsulated in the approach and the behavior of the leader.

The essential personal attributes are as follows:

Strategic thinking: For the success of each individual in the organization, it is required to learn and understand the different functions of an organization. This will allow its **physical divisions** and layers to work together. This means understanding the complexities and the changes happening in the corporate world, and consider how the organization can best respond to these. This also means understanding the strengths and weaknesses of an organization, and the opportunities and threats it faces. It requires understanding how the strategic objectives are influenced by all the current and future influences that will impact the organization. It also involves understanding that the operational objectives and targets must be in line with and support the strategic objectives of the organization and being aware of and responding to the behavior of current and potential competitors.

Support Organizational Goals: A leader will create and communicate a vision which can be understood and supported by people at all levels; help others to understand and contribute to the strategic goals; and give support to the strategic direction and specific goals set by the organization.

Effective Communication: A leader will be responsive to messages and signals from the internal and external members; make appropriate use of communication channels from and to all levels within the organization; pro-actively encourage the exchange of information within the organization, and amongst suppliers, customers and partners. They will listen to everyone around them carefully and thoughtfully; selecting personal communication styles that are appropriate to the



different situations and audiences.

Gathering Information: A leader will establish multiple channels and networks within and outside the organization that generate a constant flow of information. They will regularly and consistently analyze and use the gathered information in a creative and challenging manner.

Ethics: This requires a balanced and open minded approach towards the ethical concerns of team members, keeping in mind ethical issues and implications of all personal actions and organizational activity. The **leader is required** to raise and discuss all ethical issues before agreeing to decisions, and resist pressure from the organization to achieve objectives by unethical means.

Decision making: A leader should establish a consistent approach to the analysis of information, drawing on experience and knowledge to identify current and potential problems; consider a range of solutions before finalizing; and ensure that the selected decision is feasible, achievable, and affordable. They should also consider the impact of the decision on all stakeholders, at all levels, before approving implementation. In addition, they need to be responsible for their decisions and any actions taken.

Develop Effective Teams: A leader will appreciate the contribution of team members and others at all levels in the organization. They will ensure that they are kept informed of plans, developments and issues that will affect them; ensure that schemes are given appropriate priority, providing personal support for the implementation and maintenance of development activities.

Behave Assertively: A leader will understand and respond to personal roles and responsibilities; be prepared for involvement in activities and events; confident and professional in dealing with change and challenges; refuse unreasonable demands; defend and protect individuals and teams from unfair or discriminatory actions; and remain professional in manner at all times.

Concentrate on Results: A leader will contribute to the establishment of an organizational culture which demands high standards and performance; focus on organizational objectives and planned outcomes, at all times; deal with issues when they arise; plan and schedule personal work and the work of others in ways which make best use of available resources; delegate appropriately; and give personal attention to the critical issues and events.

Manage Yourself: Managing self is the most important factor for a leader that is in charge of managing people. They need to show discipline with regularity on personal performance and



progress. They should also pro-actively ask for feedback on personal performance and change depending on the feedback received. They are responsible for their own personal developmental needs.

Be Positive: A leader should initiate progressive action behaving in a professional manner at all times; being open-minded and responsive to the needs of others; visibly working towards personal and career development goals. They should also adopt an ethical approach to all personal and organizational activity; being supportive to colleagues; and demonstrate fairness and integrity at all times.

Out of the many essential attributes, we have discussed only a few of them. The size of the organization, and the business sector, whether public or private, is of no consequence.

Possessing these personal attributes and demonstrating them in behavior and actions, business leaders will be more effective and more successful.