



How the Best Leaders Lead

Leaders come in all shapes and sizes, all personality types and with a wide variety of backgrounds. Some are born into leadership positions; others find a path that sometimes feels more like a rollercoaster. But, in all cases, great leaders share characteristics that make their companies successful and their people loyal.

No matter what industry a leader is in, no matter how large the company, no matter

*"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way."
- John C. Maxwell*

how complex the organization, a great leader understands that he or she is in the people business. Engaging customers, employees and suppliers is "Job #1" for successful leaders.

Here are additional key characteristics of great leaders:

Great leaders are always **great communicators.** They understand how adults learn, change and embrace new initiatives and strategies. It's not easy for an organization to adapt to change, but great leaders over-communicate and make it their job to ensure that everyone understands the plan.

Creating the vision and the picture of the future is critical to the success of a great leader. Knowing where the organization is headed, and how to get there, is a leadership characteristic that sets the great



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- Snack Food
- Packaging
- Aluminum Siding
- Glass and Glazing
- Industrial and Automotive Tools



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leader apart. Great leaders take a vision and give it life. They tell stories that make the vision memorable. They give their vision qualities and attributes that bring the vision to life. They paint a visual picture of what the company will look like in 3 – 10 years. And then they communicate that picture over and over and over again. They create a vision that truly guides the company; a vision that is more powerful and sustainable than a vision or mission statement. A great leader creates a true vision that could never be contained in a short “committee designed, corporate speak” statement, but one that lives in the culture of the company.

Great leaders **live the culture and are the guardians of the core values** of the company. They know that they have to be exemplary at living

out the core values because they are under a microscope that is waiting to expose hypocrisy. Great leaders are intentional in their behavior and are always mindful of the ripple effect of their actions.

Knowing the numbers is what allows many great leaders to enjoy a work/life balance. It’s said that Dave Thomas, of Wendy’s Fast Food restaurant, only needed one number to know how the business was doing. That number was called “The One Bun Number.” Because buns are used in all of the variety of sandwiches and burgers that Wendy produces, Thomas could use that number to calculate how the business was doing and how it was trending. Thomas used other numbers as well – numbers that were trailing and predicting indicators.

Great leaders build **accountability and discipline** into their companies. They “bake” it into the culture so that everyone is aligned and moving toward the vision of the company. No one gets a free pass and everyone commits to the role they play to move the company forward. Holding people accountable is one of the most difficult tasks for leaders because of the consequences when

JEFF BLEACHER



“Great leaders are multi-faceted with a passion for their people and their businesses. Without that passion, we see leaders who have trouble sustaining the energy and enthusiasm that is needed when you hit the ceiling in your business and times get tough. Leaders with passion keep their people engaged and encouraged.”

KEN FALK (on the right)



“Leaders who have vision and the skills to execute on the vision are the ones who really shine. When a company grows year over year and the people are loyal to the company and the leader you know that the success is based on foundational trust and respect.”

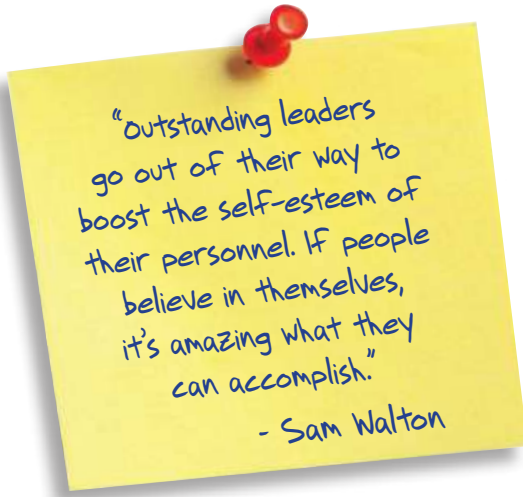
“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”
- John Quincy Adams



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people don't perform. Great leaders know that accountability starts at the top and they build in accountability processes for themselves as well.

Consistent and Trustworthy: great leaders know that trust needs to be earned and being consistent is a foundational aspect of building trust. When people know they can count on their leader they are more productive and loyal.



Great leaders are also:

- ✓ **Proactive vs. Reactive**
- ✓ **Respectful**
- ✓ **Open-minded and Open to Feedback**
- ✓ **Business Structure Architects**
- ✓ **Naturally Curious and Inquisitive**
- ✓ **Analytical**
- ✓ **Organized**
- ✓ **Delegators**
- ✓ **Committed to Long Term Success**

In summary, great organizations achieve organizational excellence through great leadership. And while there are many additional skills that great leaders exhibit, they always remember that they are in the people business. Taking care of people is "Job #1."

JEFF GROFF



"Great leaders use both science and psychology to develop systems and processes that serve everyone - the customer, the team members, the suppliers and the community. Great Leaders look out for others before they take care of themselves."

PATRICK GENDRUE (on the left)



"Leadership that is genuine and authentic builds great companies. When there is a clear vision and the team is all aligned towards making that vision a reality, then you have great momentum and energy in the company. It's great to see leadership that brings significance and meaning to the work world.."

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