

# Successful Leadership: Traits Revisited

Jatin Vaid\*

Assistant professor, Vivekanad Institute of Professional studies (VIPS), New Delhi, India; jatinvaid@gmail.com

## Abstract

Leadership may be defined as the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of a vision or set of goals<sup>8</sup>. The source of this influence may be formal. An organization providing its managers with certain formal rights cannot assure that they will lead effectively. At times, the ability to influence arising outside the formal organizational structure, often referred to as nonsanctioned leadership is even more important than the formal influence. Organizations need strong leaders to challenge the status quo, create visions for the future and inspire members to want to achieve the visions.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Leaders, benchmark, ideal, decisive, communicate

(Date of Acceptance: 01-02-2015; Plagiarism Check Date: 05-02-2015; Peer Reviewed by Three editors blindly: 14-02-2015; Reviewer's Comment send to author: 20-02-2015; Comment Incorporated and Revert by Author: 10-03-2015; Send for CRC: 18-03-2015)

Historically, strong business leaders like Steve Jobs, Rattan Tata, N.R Narayana Murthy, Richard Branson, Anand Mahindra, Indira Nooyi, K.V Kamath and Jack Welch have been described in terms of their traits, i.e., personal qualities and characteristics that helped them successfully lead their organizations. Identifying and developing effective leadership behaviour continues to be important to organizations. Leadership development is a process in which participants compare themselves with some kind of ideal or benchmark, identify where they meet this benchmark and where they fall short of, and finally develop ways to bring themselves up to scratch. In practice, leadership situations vary considerably and as a result, effective leadership behaviour is situational<sup>6</sup>. Certain innate or personality traits contribute to the extent to which individuals engage in the leadership development process<sup>7</sup>. Many recent theories of leadership have recognized the role of emotions in leader-follower interactions<sup>4</sup>.

Leadership is a phenomenon that exists in human society and is built upon the relationship between people. The successful leaders need to be proactive and have a driving force. They should be benevolent and be able to win the full support of their followers. Successful leaders are loving, caring and listening. They tolerate the mistakes of their followers in order to encourage creativity and innovative performance. This loving and embracing energy builds up a charisma around the leader, which attracts the best talents around him. The circumstances of leadership at both internal and external levels are under constant change. From a Taoist perspective, leaders and followers are interchangeable, not just because leaders are followers of their superiors and followers might be leaders of their subordinates, but also their positions are changeable over the time<sup>2</sup>.

Leadership actually emerges or develops over time – not at a unique specific instant. It seems to appear and then disappear; it is elusive. In the endless avalanche of self-help books on leadership

there are recommendations for how to become a leader and behave like one. This article summarizes several fundamental concepts that have shaped the current debate about leadership. It hopes to dispel some leadership myths and offer some advice to leaders about how to perform more effectively in their roles<sup>1</sup>. It is essential for leaders to focus on priority areas, simplify the processes, take end to end responsibility, push the followers for perfection, build a team of “A” Players, have the ability to engage face to face and should essentially know both the big picture and the details<sup>5</sup>.

Leaders are often looked up to clarify purpose and values, set direction, build community and manage change. The primary role of a successful leader is to develop a culture that enables individuals to coalesce around the shared purpose of the enterprise. Listening to the needs of the followers and responding accordingly is essential, for the collective intelligence of the followers can be a crucial asset. And since leaders must try to influence the direction of the enterprise, the art of communication is equally important. Leaders inspire, motivate and enable followers to find meaning in their work<sup>1</sup>.

Successful leaders often practice and apply the following ten simple but powerful habits on the job<sup>3</sup>:

1. Acknowledge: When things are going well in your organization, let people know--early and often. Publicly recognize productive employees for their contributions. Make a big deal about it. Encourage outstanding, sustained performance by showing your employees how much their efforts are appreciated. Studies show that acknowledging the great things your employees do can be more motivational than bonuses.
2. Motivate: Set high standards for communication, productivity, and professionalism throughout your organization. During periods when these standards are not met, avoid assigning blame and singling out poor performance, as these responses only call attention to the problems. Find ways to get back on track as an

- organization. Don't lower your standards, instead, partner with your employees and take on challenges as a team. Enlist your employees' input to identify blocking issues, focus attention on possible solutions, and strive to meet and exceed expectations.
3. **Be Decisive:** All leaders must make tough decisions. It goes with the job. They understand that in certain situations, difficult and timely decisions must be made in the best interests of the entire organization, decisions that require a firmness, authority, and finality that will not please everyone. Extraordinary leaders don't hesitate in such situations. They also know when not to act unilaterally but instead foster collaborative decision-making.
  4. **Communicate:** Communicate clearly, professionally, and often. Employees expect their manager's honest assessment of their performance. In order to credibly provide this feedback, excellent managers must thoroughly understand their organizations and accurately assess progress. When things are running smoothly, highlight what is working and communicate success throughout the organization. When problems arise, consider the potential impact you can have by constructively communicating your concerns. Remember that communication is a tool that can (and should) inspire and motivate as well as identify and resolve problems.
  5. **Trust:** Learn to trust your employees. Bosses who believe employees are capable and responsible encourage autonomy while also creating a strong sense of community throughout the organization. To establish trust, create a safe, positive working environment with open, honest, two-way communication. Trust that your employees will meet or exceed organizational goals when working in a productive, safe, and supportive environment.
  6. **Be Confident:** Not only are the best leaders confident, but their confidence is contagious. Employees are naturally drawn to them, seek their advice, and feel more confident as a result. When challenged, they don't give in too easily, because they know their ideas, opinions and strategies are well-informed and the result of much hard work. But when proven wrong they take responsibility and quickly act to improve the situations within their authority.
  7. **Develop:** Set up your employees for success, not failure. Provide them with the tools and training they need to reach their full potential, and to meet and exceed the standards you have set. Encourage them to identify their strengths and what motivates them. When possible, incorporate what drives them into their daily tasks.
  8. **Direct:** Ensure that your employees feel challenged with their jobs, but not overwhelmed. Create a clean, well maintained, and organized working environment where they can do their work and feel comfortable. Delegate tasks appropriately and look for opportunities to maximize each employee's strengths.
  9. **Partner:** Make your employees feel like they are a part of something special and that their efforts are truly appreciated. Involve them directly in the success of the organization. Create and cultivate a sense of camaraderie, where people feel it is fun to come to work, because it is a positive and productive environment and they feel they are part of an efficient, skilled, and highly successful community.
  10. **Be Honest and Transparent:** Strong leaders treat people how they want to be treated. They are extremely ethical and believe that honesty, effort, and reliability form the foundation of success. They embody these values so overtly that no employee doubts their integrity for a minute. They share information openly and avoid spin control. These practices and behaviors will have a major impact on the effectiveness of your employees. Be the very best boss you can be and your employees will step up. When you get the very best from your people, your business will be tough to beat.

## References

1. Allio RJ. Leaders and Leadership - many theories, but what advice is reliable? *Strategy & Leadership* . 2012; 41(1):4–14.
2. Bai X, Roberts W. Taoism and its model of traits of successful leaders. *Journal of Management Development*. 30(7/8):724–39.
3. Economy P. 10 things that super successful leaders do. *The Economic Times - Corporate Dossier*. 2015 May 22. p. 4.
4. Hong Y, Catano VM, Liao H. Leader emergence: the role of emotional intelligence and motivation to lead. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*. 2011; 32(4).
5. Isaacson W. *The Real Leadership Lessons of Steve Jobs*. Harvard Business Review . 2012 April.
6. Manning T, Robertson B. The Dynamic Leader Revisited: 360 - degree assessments of leadership behaviours in different leadership situation. *Industrial and commercial training*. 2011; 43(2):88–97.
7. McDermott A, Kidney R, Flood P. Understanding Leader Development: Learning from leaders. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*. 2011; 32(4):358–78.
8. Robbins SP, Judge TA, Vohra N. *Organizational Behavior*. 15 ed. New Delhi: Pearson Education; 2014.

### Citation:

Jatin Vaid  
 "Successful Leadership: Traits Revisited",  
*Global Journal of Enterprise Information System*. Volume-7, Issue-2, April-June, 2015 (www.gjeis.org)

### Conflict of Interest:

Author of a Paper had no conflict neither financially nor academically.