

LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS: FOUR ANSWERS ABOUT LEADERSHIP

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<http://www.sideroad.com/Leadership/leadership-characteristic.html>

Why Does Leadership Matter?

Parents universally hope that their children develop leadership qualities. They know that leaders are people who are effective in what they do, are respected by others, and typically rewarded for those skills in a variety of ways. It is in these formative years that, through our parents, we first see leadership as desirable and important.

As young people we look up to people around us that motivate and listen to us; people that seem like "real-life" heroes. We consider these people leaders. As we grow we begin to relate leaders to their jobs - ministers, teachers, police officers. And later Mayors, Presidents, and CEO's . . .

As adults all of these thoughts and experiences define why we think leaders have desirable traits and play roles we admire (and why we desire these things for our children).

All of these experiences and thoughts help us define why leadership matters - it matters because leaders make a difference and can shape the future. It matters because leaders are valued and valuable. In everyone's mind leadership, especially when it is good, matters.

What is a Leader?

A leader is a person who sees something that needs to be done, knows that they can help make it happen, and gets started.

A leader sees opportunity and captures it.

A leader sees a future that can be different and better, and helps others see that picture too.

A leader knows they can't do it alone.

A leader is a coach.

A leader is an encourager.

A leader views change as their ally.

A leader is willing to take risks today for something better tomorrow.

A leader is a learner.

A leader is a communicator.

A leader is a coordinator.

A leader is a listener.

A leader takes a long view - letting their vision keep their daily steps on track.

A leader is passionate.

A leader motivates and inspires.

A leader values results.

A leader cares about more than results though; she cares about those who are following her lead.

A leader makes a difference in the lives of others.

A leader is all of these things and much more.

Are People Born Leaders?

Sure they are - I mean everyone is born, right?

You might say that riddle-like answer misses the point. You say the real answer is that some people are truly born to lead.

And I would reply that your common statement implies that others aren't born to be leaders. So let's examine that difference of opinion...

When people describe someone as a "born leader" they typically mean that the person is motivating, a good communicator and charismatic. And it is true; some people are blessed at birth with more natural ability in these ways.

But leaders can be great with different innate characteristics as well. And there is no single small skill set that defines the perfect leader or guarantees success.

Everyone is born with a unique set of natural abilities. And all of us can develop skills and styles to complement those natural abilities.

Who is a Leader?

This question on the surface is the easiest question I've asked so far. After all, I've already given some examples.

People in certain roles are leaders, whether they've studied for the role, like a doctor, lawyer, teacher or minister... got elected to the role, like a county councilman, mayor, Senator or President... or worked up the through the organization like a supervisor, manager, Vice President or CEO.

You can ask most anyone the question "Who is a leader?" and those are the kinds of answers they will give you.

They are right, of course. But they are only partially right.

Leaders aren't leaders because of a job title.
Leaders are leaders because they lead.

Which takes me back to my previous question - "Are people born leaders?" Yes they are. But it isn't just a few that have been hand picked by our Creator or random genetics.

We have all been picked - genetics has selected us all.
We were all born to lead, in our own way.
We may not be the Chairman of the Board. We may not be the person on the stage.
We may not lead with oratory or flair.
We may lead by compassion.
We may lead by example.
We all can lead.
We all have the ability to be remarkable leaders.

Leadership isn't about position.
Leadership isn't about power.
Leadership is about potential - your potential.

You are a leader. Claim and believe this to be true, for it is. Stake your claim and make a difference in the world around you.

Your opportunities for leadership are endless. The rewards are boundless.

My answers to four questions lead to a question for you...

Where will you lead?