

On Becoming a Successful Leader

If you have these work traits and skills, you have the potential of being a leader.

Vision: The ability to establish a vision that integrates goals, priorities, values, and other factors of the organization. This includes the ability to manage change while maintaining and striving to improve customer service and program performance; to create a work environment that encourages creative thinking; and to maintain focus, intensity, and persistence, even under adversity.

People Skills: The ability to design and implement strategies that maximize employee potential and foster high ethical standards in meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals.

Commitment: The ability to focus on hard work, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Business Acumen: The ability to acquire and administer human, financial, material, and information resources in a manner that instills trust and accomplishes the organization's mission, and to use new technology to enhance decision making.

Build Coalitions/Communication: The ability to explain, advocate, and express facts and ideas in a convincing manner, and negotiate with individuals and groups internally and externally. It also involves the ability to develop an expansive professional network with other organizations, and to identify the internal and external politics that affect the work of the organization.

Becoming a Great Boss

Leaders have good people skills, but a "good boss" has skills that go far beyond. Besides common courtesy, listening skills, and excellent communication, the good boss understands and empathizes with people from all backgrounds, all races, both genders, and all ages. The good boss is never "too good" to associate with employees and demonstrate the "common touch." The good boss never refuses to communicate, no matter how minor the role a person may play in the organization. The good boss maintains eye contact, praises good performance, shows a sense of humor, and participates in activities.

Commitment

While leaders often give career goals top priority, a good boss puts the organization and employees first, before his or her own needs and career goals. The good boss feels a strong commitment to those who work for him or her, and hesitates to leave the organization for that reason. The good boss's personal drive may be sacrificed for the organization or its employees.

Knowledge

While a leader knows the organization, a good boss makes decisions



with the knowledge of what is best for the employees as well as for the organization. The good boss understands that employees are the key to success and never ignores or undervalues them. The good boss plans goals, ways to achieve them, and backup plans with the good of employees in mind.

The good boss promotes opportunities for employees to increase their knowledge and improve their abilities. The good boss acknowledges that he or she is not the only "sage on the stage," that others have valuable opinions and suggestions too. The good boss creates a team committed to the good of the organization and its members.

As you extend your leadership abilities, don't forget those that make a truly successful leader — a good boss.