

# Leadership:

## Seeing What Is *Really* in the Mirror

A true leader has seven essential qualities. He allows subordinates the latitude to make mistakes; follows through with good intentions; sets the example for subordinates; has a deeply ingrained professional love for his subordinates; can adapt to change; knows how to relate to subordinates; and knows what is important to the mission/organization, the individual and self. The following thoughts attempt to help leaders to forget about managing the problems of daily life and focus their attention on leading others to achieve common goals that will help make “life’s rockiest roads” seem smoother.

**1. The leader allows Soldiers and junior leaders to exercise their initiative.** Too often a “leader” is a micro-manager who tells others how to do their work to be more productive—after all, a micro-manager considers himself a subject matter expert (SME) in most areas. The true leader tells subordinates to exercise their own initiative, so those subordinates may grow into leaders themselves.

The leader is competent, but not too proud to accept advice, based on his subordinates’ experience.

**2. The leader has more than good intentions; he follows through with those intentions.** “The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.” Therefore, action must follow ideas to develop subordinates’ trust. The leader remains objective as much as possible to provide

a realistic view of the situation and take the correct actions to follow through on his good intentions.

**3. The leader sets the example in all that he does.** He strives to be impeccably moral and ethical. In all other areas, the leader does not have to be “the best” but must give his best. He must give 100

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*As you review these essential leader qualities, honestly assess: where do you stand as a leader? After you have performed that assessment, challenge yourself to become the leader your subordinates deserve.*

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percent at all times, so he can expect the same from his subordinates.

**4. The leader loves his subordinates and gives selflessly.** He acts as a parent to his subordinates. The leader listens to his subordinates and finds time to address their problems. He knows that subordinates can teach him lessons that his position does not allow him to see.

The leader has an overwhelming personal desire to make his subordinates successful. This attitude is contagious and allows subordinates to overlook his shortcomings. He sets goals for subordinates, helps them achieve the goals and then praises them for achieving the goals.

**5. The leader is adaptive.** If a leader does not have this quality, he risks the very existence of his organization.

The leader analyzes new situations and learns the changes in goals of the new organization. A true leader leaves his “comfort zone” and adapts to change before change is implemented without him, and his subordinates suffer.

At the same time, he does not try to “change the world in a day.”

**6. The leader relates to his subordinates.** He understands the demands on his subordinates on a daily basis. Periodically, he works alongside them, especially when they are performing complex or unpleasant tasks.

The leader keeps a firm “finger on the pulse” of those he leads. When a Soldier fails, the leader asks himself whether or not he failed the Soldier.

**7. The leader knows what is and what is not important.** The leader has vision and knows what his organization’s goals are, making sure these goals are nested with his higher headquarters’ goals. He understands that any task or event that takes away from achieving these goals is nonessential. An organization whose leaders take on too much becomes a “jack-of-all-trades and a master of none.”

So, do you have these qualities?

You may find you are lacking in some leader qualities. This does not mean you are ineffective. Everybody has his strengths and weaknesses, but all can overcome weaknesses with the right attitude and work.

If you are willing to sacrifice your personal agenda for the good of your subordinates and strive to develop these seven key qualities, you just might be surprised at your increased effectiveness in leading those around you.

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A squad leader gives instructions to one of his Soldiers in Iraq.