

FOURTEEN ATTRIBUTES OF A LEADER

FROM: JOHN W. GARDNER, On Leadership (1990), pps. 48-54, The Free Press

1. Physical Vitality and Stamina—Vitality and stamina include the ability to convene meetings after a hard day's work, to chair long and heated debates, to represent groups, etc., all the while maintaining a level of optimism. It takes energy to be a leader.
2. Intelligence and Judgment in Action—Judgment-in-action includes effective problem solving, designing strategies, setting priorities, and making intuitive as well as rational judgments. Most importantly, it includes the capacity to appraise the potentialities of co-workers and opponents.
3. Willingness (Eagerness) to Accept Responsibilities—Accepting responsibility includes the impulse to exercise initiative in social situations, to bear the burden of making a decision, and to step forward when no one else will.
4. Task Competence—May involve either knowledge of the task at hand, or more broadly, knowledge of the whole system in which they preside, its mission, its goals, and the environment in which the group functions.
5. Understanding Group Members/Constituents and Their Needs—Leaders must understand the various constituencies with whom they work.
6. Skill in Dealing with People—Leaders should maintain social perceptiveness, accurately appraise the readiness of the group to move in a direction, know when dissension or confusion is present, make the most of group motives, and understand sensitivities.
7. Need to Achieve—Leaders have a driving need to achieve a certain objective.
8. Capacity to Motivate—More than any other attribute, **this is the heart of leadership**. Leaders move people to action, communicate persuasively, and strengthen confidence.
9. Courage, Resolution, and Steadiness—A leader needs courage, not just courage over time, but the courage to take risks again and again, to function under stress, and to keep going when they feel defeat.
10. Capacity to Win and Hold Trust—A leader wins and holds the trust of its group.
11. Capacity to Manage, Decide, Set Priorities—Leaders must make decisions and from time to time they must perform management responsibilities such as formulating goals, framing a course of action, and setting priorities.
12. Confidence—Leadership requires confidence to take risks and confidence to handle the hostility that will come into their path.
13. Ascendance, Dominance, Assertiveness—Leaders are assertive, although not necessarily forceful, and their impression on events.
14. Adaptability, Flexibility of Approach—A leader must not stubbornly cling to an approach that does not produce results. Leaders are stable, but their tactics are flexible.