

Seven Aspects of Leadership

While rereading John Maxwell's book, "The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership," I came across a list of seven key areas that reveal if a leader is truly respected. I found them a great summary and would like to review them with you:

Character – Leadership is all about character, the inner person. What makes a leader act? What are the leader's true motives? What a leader does in their personal life determines their character. What is the depth of a leader's character? It is all about who they are inside when no one is watching.

Relationship – Loners don't make good leaders. Great leaders build deep relationships with many people. I remember reading a story one time about a banker in a town that had a rolodex full of names. Any time someone in that town had a problem or needed something, people would go to him and he would connect them with someone that could help them out. He was a town leader simply because he had built relationships with so many people. When he picked up the phone, people responded to him. Leadership is about the number of relationships they have built. Who do they know?

Knowledge – There are three kinds of knowledge on any matter: past, present and future. When my church hired a new pastor, I remember how he came in and studied the past history of our 21 year old church. He then had a town hall meeting to discuss what was on the hearts and minds of the members of the congregation. Only after he assessed the current situation, did he cast a vision for the future of the church. You see he had the wisdom to make himself knowledgeable about the past and current situation before he formed a vision of where the church was to go. Had he just stepped in and done his own thing, many of the members would have left. Information is vital to a leader. What do they learn for themselves?

Intuition – All great leaders have it. It is an ability to read a situation. Some people are born with it but you can acquire it with experience. It is the talent to trust your gut feelings. It is a keen understanding that you can't always explain. It is a reception you can act on. Call it a premonition. It is an intangible asset that is hard to measure but it is invaluable when it comes to making quick decisions. It is the ability to act on a hunch. In what areas of your life do you have a strong intuition?

Experience – Not the experience of just being there, but the experience of producing positive results in a situation. The greater the problems you have solved in the past gives people the confidence to trust you to lead in the future. It is where you have been and in what areas you have demonstrated genuine know-how.

Past Success – What kind of challenges have they exposed themselves to and succeeded? What have they done?

Ability – Whether it is a natural talent they were born with, education they acquired, or skills they have learned, leadership is still about demonstrating one's capabilities. People will listen to you and follow you as long as you deliver. It is all about continuous accomplishment.

The irony of leadership is that it can be lost as well as gained. Leadership has no guarantee of permanency. Once you have gained a position of leadership, you must keep honing all of these areas to maintain the position. As soon as people believe you have stopped growing and stopped delivering, they will stop listening. When people stop listening, they'll no longer follow your leadership.

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