

The most admired leaders have these 7 traits

1. Integrity

Good leaders are authentic, trustworthy and reliable. They have strong moral principles that don't waver, even when they might close a deal or make more money by exaggerating or lying. Strengthen this leadership skill by doing the right thing, even when it's difficult or unpopular. Be honest and trustworthy. And if you're unable to keep your word due to circumstances outside your control, you should explain the situation and strive to make things right.

2. Fairness (It's human nature to prefer certain people over others)

However, good leaders don't show favoritism because they know to do so leads to bad employee morale. Empathy is the key to treating everyone fairly. Get in the habit of asking yourself, "How would I like it if someone did this to me?" This question applies when divvying up the workload, issuing social invitations and deciding whether to take all the glory or share the credit.

3. Decisiveness

Employees become suspicious when leaders espouse one viewpoint today and the opposite tomorrow. The person in charge should know their own mind and stick to their convictions. Take time before deciding on an issue, but once you've made up your mind, stick with it.

4. Strategic thinking

Effective leaders play the long game. While not forgoing immediate gains, they also consider repercussions down the line and actively plan for their company's future. Strategic thinking requires you to look at the bigger picture.

5. Transparency

This leadership skill is closely tied to trust and accountability. Respected leaders share information with their staff and shareholders as soon as it can be divulged. Transparency hangs on a person's ability to communicate. You should explain your rationale for decisions and speak up when you need help.

6. Accessibility

This leadership quality has two components: Can others reach you, and are you approachable? Leaders are busy people, but they shouldn't be so sequestered that employees have to jump through multiple hoops to speak with them. How friendly and welcoming are you? If it appears that coworkers, vendors or even clients find your attitude to be intimidating, work on softening your demeanor. This also means not appearing so busy that people are afraid to approach you for help, advice or to give you a hand.

7. Collaboration

The best leaders work with and get advice from colleagues. To hone this type of leadership skill, ramp up your in-house networking. Get to know someone outside your work bubble. Volunteer for projects that put you in contact with a range of employees.

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