



*Do not repeat the tactics, which have gained you one victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite variety of circumstances.*

- Sun Tzu

## The Evolution of Leadership

As long as there have been leaders, there have been those who tried to determine how and why they were successful. Leadership itself has not evolved, but our understanding of it has. It is important to understand why very different leadership styles can be effective, why the same leadership techniques will not work in every situation, and which leadership style fits your personality best. Everyone has leadership potential within them, but understanding these concepts will help you maximize your leadership ability.

### DEFINING LEADERSHIP

Simply speaking, “leadership” is defined as “the ability to lead.” Unfortunately, this is not very helpful. A better definition comes from the BNET online Business Dictionary: “*The capacity to establish direction and to influence and align others toward a common goal, motivating and committing them to action and making them responsible for their performance.*” Although this is more descriptive, it is not substantial. It does not tell us what leadership actually *is*, but rather what it *does*.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF A LEADER

The mark of a true leader is not a position or title held, but it is how many people are willing to follow them. Santa Clara University and the Tom Peters group outline the following leadership characteristics:

- Honest
- Competent
- Forward-looking
- Inspiring
- Intelligent
- Fair-minded
- Broad-minded
- Courageous
- Straightforward
- Imaginative

## LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

The United States Army offers 11 Leadership Principles:

- Be tactically and technically proficient
- Know yourself and seek self-improvement
- Know your soldiers and look out for their welfare
- Keep your soldiers informed
- Set the example  
Ensure the task is understood, supervised and accomplished
- Train your soldiers as a team
- Make sound and timely decisions
- Develop a sense of responsibility in your subordinates
- Employ your unit in accordance with its capabilities
- Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions

You will notice that none of the above actually tells you *how to lead* in a practical manner. They don't address what to do or say in any given situation. That is because there is no real formula to being a leader. Leadership must come from within and it is based on your personality. In this book, you will learn how to develop your innate leadership abilities and build the confidence required in being a true leader.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF LEADERSHIP

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### HISTORICAL LEADERS

Throughout the centuries, there have been leaders. We are social animals who bond together, but we look for order against the chaos of life. We look to be organized to accomplish tasks as a society that we cannot perform individually. As a result, someone inevitably ends up in charge.

Leaders in the past have generally belonged to one of three categories: Political, Military or Religious.

- Political: Around 1790 B.C., Babylonian ruler Hammurabi created the codified laws, which unified his empire in what was seen as a fair order as all people were subject to the same rules.
- Military: Sun Tzu was a military general in China from 500 B.C. He wrote the Art of War, and although he was a great military leader, his book is actually about how to *not* use armies except as a last resort, focusing more on wise political policies and strategies to prevent war.



- Religious: It may be said that religious leaders have had the greatest impact on their societies, with results that last for centuries.

## **MODERN LEADERS**

With the rise of the industrial revolution, a new kind of leader emerged: Economic. The so-called Captains of Industry found they could build an empire based on modern technology instead of swords. Oil Barons, railroad magnates, and factory owners built large fortunes without the benefit of armies; it was often at the expense of the people they employed. This gave rise to Union leaders and various movements designed to promote justice where abuses were perceived to exist.



The Industrial Revolution also increased the number of Scientific Leaders, as scientists now had easy access to a wide range of new materials for their work. Psychiatry and Psychology came into prominence with studies on the workplace, in regards to improving productivity and the effect on the workforce.

Studies have shown consistently that workers are more productive when they are in a “positive work environment.” The attitude and influence of the boss is a major factor in this productivity. If employees feel they are listened to, respected, and treated fairly, they are happier in their work and perform better than those who feel they are disrespected and unappreciated. Which kind of work environment would you prefer?

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## **THREE THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP**

### **THE GREAT MAN THEORY**

The Great Man Theory was abandoned in favor of the theories of behavioral science. It's easy to be inspired by stories of great men and women who did great things in their lives. Alexander the Great conquered the known world. Genghis Khan then ravaged most of it. Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves. Harriet Tubman saved hundreds from slavery in the Underground Railroad. Mother Theresa aided and comforted thousands in Calcutta who were abandoned by society. Theory goes that these people did great things because they were simply great people determined by fate and fulfilling their destiny.

### **THE TRAIT THEORY**

It has often been said, “Great leaders are born, not made.” Trait Theory takes this saying literally. If you have the ability to lead, you were born with it, with no way to learning those skills. This theory expands on the Great Man Theory by defining what makes great leaders “great.”

Today, we recognize that true leadership seems to come from a combination of both theories – and more. As we have seen, there are wide varieties of leadership qualities. Everyone has some ability in at least one or more of these areas. This means that under the right circumstances, anyone can rise to a leadership role

and be successful based on the leadership style that best matches their personality if they know how to use that ability to properly address the situation at hand. Other leadership skills can indeed be learned, developed, and mastered.

### **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

In 1978, James MacGregor Burns introduced the idea of transformational leadership as he researched political leaders. Burns theorized that “transformational leadership” is actually a process where leaders interact with their followers and inspire each other to advance together. His characteristics and behaviors demonstrated the differences between “management” and “leadership.” People and organizations are transformed due to the leadership style and abilities of the leader, who is able to convey a vision and guide the transformation.

Bernard M. Bass, in 1985, added to Burns’ transformational leadership theory by shifting the focus to the followers. It is not the individual traits and vision of the leader that matter as much as it is their ability to influence the feelings, attitudes, and commitment of their followers. As we mentioned before in productivity studies, if followers feel they can trust a leader (or better yet, if they admire a leader who can stimulate a sense of loyalty and respect) the followers go beyond what was originally expected of them and will do so happily. As a result, productivity and unity increases. The followers are transformed by a charismatic, motivational leader.

### **SUMMARY**

Through all of the studies, we have seen that there are a variety of attributes and abilities associated with leadership, and these vary from leader to leader. Some leaders are great orators, others great writers. Some leaders are very quiet, but the force of their logic or passion wins the day. The difference between a good leader and a great leader is partly the number of leadership skills they have developed. The other part is their ability to apply those skills properly to those who would follow. We will address these issues in the next section.

### **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Julie and Mindy had worked side by side for over five years. They chatted between projects and took lunch breaks together. When the company restructured, Julie was given a management position and Mindy became her subordinate. Mindy felt that it was unfair that she now had to take instructions from Julie and her negative attitude caused the department to lose productivity. Julie understood that it would take time to earn back Mindy’s respect. She kept a positive attitude when working with Mindy and always kept Mindy informed of things that were relevant to Mindy’s job. She assigned tasks to Mindy that she knew Mindy could accomplish and she gave appropriate feedback when work was delivered. Julie took responsibility for her decisions and didn’t blame others when things went wrong. Over time, she gained Mindy’s respect and the department’s productivity soared.