

# Perception



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Many see themselves as leaders of men, but few have what it takes to do so. At a very young age, an older and wiser friend of mine once remarked that “a good leader must first be a good follower”. After some time of giving this quotation much thought, I surmised that in becoming a good follower, a person is able to acquire or learn traits that would help him/her to become a good leader. The acquisition of desirable leadership traits does not only stem from learning about the positive qualities of a leader, but is a continuous process of learning, including learning from mistakes. However, the process of becoming a good leader need not be a trial and error, hard knocks experience. We are lucky that equipped with open minds and the willingness to learn, we can draw from the experiences and wisdoms of leaders who have invaluable lessons to share with us. Perhaps the most important characteristic of a leader is Integrity. People need leaders whom they can look up to and trust, especially when it comes to standards of ethics and morality. People must find comfort in knowing that the person who leads them is asking them to do the right and just things. The leader must possess the rightness of conscience consistent with those possessed by his followers. Only when given such a situation can a leader enjoy the full support of his followers; and the followers would freely give their support to their leader, knowing that he would not ask of them what he himself is not willing to do. The logical trait to follow is Consistency. Followers must perceive their leader to be reliable and trustworthy, and not tentative. They must find assurance in the fact that their leader is following a consistent frame of thought and course of action. More so, consistency establishes the perception that the leader knows his business and has done his homework. People’s trust in their leaders is further reinforced by the latter’s ability to admit mistakes. This

gives credence to the leader, since the ability to admit mistakes provides a fair and just environment. Followers will find assurance that their leader will not “ pass the buck:” at their expense. A leader must also have the ability to listen to his followers. This ensures that all possible options are explored and the best possible decisions are made. This ability also ensures that the unique circumstances or situations of followers are given consideration in every decision that is made. Lastly, a leader must be decisive. The final decision often lies in the leader. He must be able to take responsibility for his decision and have the determination to see it through.

Although there may be many characteristics attributed to a good leader, I only chose those which would have major impacts in relation to followers. Thus, these are the major characteristics which would cover all other, which one may consider, more secondary traits. I organized these characteristics starting from the more abstract (Integrity) to the more personal (Decisiveness). Thus, the organization became from the more general to the more specific trait going towards the more distinguishable trait of a leader. DeCremer stated that in-group members often possessed biases in favor of the in-group. The success of the group is often attributed to the qualities possessed by the group. In contrast, the failures of the group are attributed to external factors, which denies the responsibility of the group for the occurrence of failure. According to DeCremer, people with strong group identification have more tendency to make use of group-serving attributions. He also concluded that those with strong group identification also follow the same process in self-attribution as in the “ process of attribution for the actions of fellow group members”.

The symbolic nature of language would strongly influence how a person

perceives meanings. In the English language and especially in its literature, the use of Anglo-Saxon- versus Latin-based words can make a big difference. Most experts would agree that Anglo-Saxon-rooted words are often used in literature to connote the language of the masses; the Latin-derived words (which entered the English language through Norman French) would connote the sophistication of language of the clergy and aristocracy. As examples, the following word pairs are Anglo-Saxon- followed by their Latin-derived counterparts: pig-pork, friendly-amicable, sad-morose, happiness-felicity).

Instrumentality is the innate characteristic of an individuals to be independent, having the ability to address situations and achieve their desired results. This trait is often possessed by males, as part and essential to their masculine roles. Expressiveness is a more feminine trait, which is characterized by the ability to connect and empathize or identify with other individuals. It is also characterized by the ability to open up to others.

Androgyny is the ability to possess and combine both Instrumentality and Expressiveness, such that the individual becomes a healthier and better-rounded person. I agree that Instrumentality is more often exhibited by the masculine and Expressiveness is more dominant in females. However, I believe that each individual possesses Androgyny which may vary from one person to another, depending on background, culture, religion, environment and social factors.

References:

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