

What it means to be a Leader

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1. **You need to see things other people aren't willing to see yet.** This is a tough one. We've all done it--seen things that aren't what we want to see. Most people are great at ignoring and pretending they haven't seen. Leaders need to really see things, acknowledge them, and then adapt and respond to them--and try to convince their teams that it's important to see them, too. Hard, but not impossible. Often accompanied by periods when teams deny, belittle, and exhibit passive-aggressive behavior to justify denial. But a real leader needs to see the truth and not waver.
2. **People are waiting for you to make the tough decisions.** If you're the leader, look around the room at your team. Yes, they are looking at you and waiting with bated breath to hear what your decision is. They might hem and haw, but in their deepest hearts they *want* you to make those tough decisions. We all learn by watching, and they are watching you to see how you do it.
3. **You take responsibility and accountability for everything in your domain.** Everything. Even if it's not your fault. Even if you didn't do it. Even if it's embarrassing. You don't "throw anyone under the bus." You own it, deal with it and move on. We all make mistakes and it's not the end of the world.
4. **Your job is not to be loved, but to do the right thing.** Too many times our desire to be liked and loved causes us to delay making tough decisions, even though we know they need to be made. It can be hard to separate those feelings of neediness from the need to get things done, but things must get done.
5. **Your job is to do the right thing, with love.** There is a place for love in the life of a leader. In fact, that place is everywhere and with everything and everybody. No matter what you do, it's always better done with love. But still, remember #4, and don't think that doing things with love means needing to feel loved in return. You still need to do the right thing, just in the right way.
6. **If you don't believe in what you are doing, no one else will either.** People often think that leadership is about that corner office, the big paycheck, the nice car, perks, ego, and such. Nothing could be further from the truth. Real leadership is about creating a vision in your heart and mind and bringing the energy of manifestation to that vision so that others can see and believe in it too. That's why...
7. **You NEED to believe.** Call it passion, call it vision, call it power--it's really the power of believing in what you're doing that enables you to accomplish your goals. I

see it all the time. There are many people in positions of power who no longer believe in what they are doing, and as a result, the whole organization loses faith.

8. **But you also need contingency plans.** Surprises happen, usually daily. What's your backup plan? Doing scenario planning in your mind is helpful. But don't overdo it, because you might become distracted from your initial goal. Try to keep your vision clear and strong, but be prepared to adapt quickly.
9. **Sacrifice and long hours don't really matter, results matter.** This is a tough one for many people to swallow because it's so counter to our culture. The whole idea of "face time" and long hours and burnout are badges of honor in the traditional workplace. With digital tools, we have more flexibility than ever, but it's still the same obsession. Hard work and sacrifice don't automatically lead to success; more often, it's creative ideas, strategic intelligence, and innovation that lead to real advancement. Trust me, those things don't happen without having a good night's sleep, being well fed, and for some strange reason...taking long showers.
10. **Get out of your comfort zone, and do new things and encourage your teams to do so, too, because that's where creative ideas, strategic intelligence, and innovation come from.** Travel. Learn. Talk to people. Go food shopping. (I always call shopping "market research," since while you're there you see firsthand what people are doing and how they're responding to things.) If you do the same things over and over again, you're going to get either the same results or slightly worse results over time. The only way to get new ideas is to do new things.
11. **Listen and observe.** If you can quiet your own mind and focus your eyes, usually the answers are there to be seen and heard. Leadership isn't about just talking and making speeches and communicating--it's about watching, sitting with people, and truly hearing them--then taking it all in and going back to #1 to be willing to see things that other people aren't yet willing to see.