

Personality Traits of Leaders

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What are traits of leaders? This is not a new question. As a matter of fact, trying to determine traits of leaders has been studied for years. The first noted leadership theories focused on leadership traits of individuals. Covey (2004) points out that the first recognized leadership theory was *Great-Man Theories*. These theories focused on studying leaders like Moses, Gandhi, Washington, and Churchill. The conclusion of the Great-Man Theories was that “there is no such thing as leadership by the masses. The individuals in every society possess different degrees of intelligence, energy, and moral face” (Covey, p. 352).

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Everyone is different. Some people are extraverted while others are introverted. One thing we know for sure. Everyone has traits and everyone has different personalities. There are truly no two people that are exactly alike. We can define traits as distinguishing personal characteristics. Personality is best defined as a combination of traits that classifies an individual's behavior.

There are all types of personality profiles that help each of us determine our own personalities. One of the most widely recognized personality profiles is the “*Big Five Model of Personality*.” The Big Five Model of Personality categorizes traits into dimensions of surgency, agreeableness, adjustment, conscientiousness, and openness to experience (Lussier and Achua, 2001). Figure 1 reveals these five below.

Figure 1. Big Five Model of Personality Traits.

Surgency – includes leadership and extroversion traits. People strong in surgency like to lead and want to be in charge.

Agreeableness – includes traits related to getting along with people. People strong in this area are typically characterized as warm, easygoing, compassionate, friendly, and sociable.

Adjustment – includes traits related to emotional stability. People strong in adjustment are characterized as being good under pressure, having self control, being calm, secure, and positive.

Conscientiousness – includes traits related to achievement. People that are conscientiousness are hard working, go beyond the call of duty, and have a strong desire to achieve success.

Openness to Experience – includes traits related to being willing to change and try new things. These individuals are risk takers, free thinkers, and creative.

Traits of Effective Leaders

After understanding general personality traits, it is then important to discuss general traits that leaders have been known to possess. House and Aditya (1997) noted that there do appear to be traits that separate leaders from others.

Dominance – ability to take charge

High Energy – have drive, tolerate stress, and have enthusiasm

Self-confidence – self assured in judgments, decision making, and ideas

Locus of Control – control over your own destiny

Stability – emotionally in control of themselves, secure, and positive

Integrity – behavior that is honest, ethical, and trustworthy

Intelligence – cognitive ability to think clearly

Flexibility – ability to adjust to different situations

Sensitivity to Others – understand the difference between handling individuals and groups

Conclusion.

There are very few people in the world that are strong in these nine traits. Great leaders may not be strong in all nine of these. However, it is important that each of us know our strengths and weaknesses. What we can do is work on the traits that we may not be strong in. There is one thing we know for sure, you cannot lead others until you know yourself.

References

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