

## **LEADERSHIP TRAITS**

Prof. Bismark Agbemble

Liberty University

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## **Introduction**

Successful leadership requires one to have a certain set of unique traits that go beyond conformist skills, emphasizing qualities such as adaptability, empathy, and integrity. This paper reflects on some of the top traits necessary for successful leadership. In achieving this, the paper will draw insights from the availed course materials and external literature. The paper further explores characteristics that are incompatible with Christian values. Furthermore, the paper analyzes the 'Rational Actor' model by examining the effect of positive leadership traits in decision-making processes.

## **Top Traits of an Effective Leader**

### **Being Visionary**

Visionary leadership entails having visions that are clear and compelling about the future, which has a net effect of inspiring and motivating both the leader and their subjects (Yukl, 2012). The vision acts as a guiding beacon as it outlines the path that the leader intends to follow, bringing about certainty in an organization. Visionary leadership has several limbs that, if religiously followed, will catapult any organization to new heights.

Clarity of purpose is one of the limbs of visionary leadership. In it, a leader ought to possess a deep and clear understanding of the values, mission, and long-term objectives of the organization. With a clear grasp of this element, the leader's role is reduced to merely articulating the purpose and the direction of the organization to the subjects in a manner that resonates with them, clarifying the essence and significance of their output and the targets that they ought to aim for.

Visionary leaders ought to be forward-thinking at all times. This ensures that they are well-positioned to anticipate emerging trends, opportunities, and possible challenges in the industry. Such an approach is necessary in any organization as it puts the organization on its toes, ready to

capitalize on any potential loophole for the benefit of the organization. The leader ought to possess a keen awareness of technology related to the industry, the market shifts, and the potential societal changes. This allows the leaders to adapt their vision and align it with the best industry practices, the net effect of which is to meet the evolving circumstances.

Visionary leaders ought to have the gift of inspiring not only their subjects but also their target audience and other stakeholders in the industry. Among the key roles a visionary leader plays in any organization is that of inspiring the subjects in a manner that can arouse their interest and give their best. For this to be achieved, a visionary leader ought to have strong and effective communication skills, personal conviction, and top-notch story-telling skills. This way, a leader will easily ignite enthusiasm and passion among the team members, motivating them to wholeheartedly commit to the shared goals. The role of visionary leadership cannot be underrated.

### **Integrity**

Integrity is one of the most desired leadership traits, regardless of the industry that a leader may find themselves in as it is key for trust-building. Honest leaders, who are ethical and consistent in whatever they do have the advantage of earning respect and trust from their followers. Essentially, and in the long term, this helps foster a working environment that is not only positive but also friendly.

Integrity dictates that a leader ought to be honest and transparent in all their endeavors. Leaders who pride themselves in upholding integrity tend to be truthful in their interactions, both with their subjects and other key stakeholders in the industry. This ensures that they provide accurate information, avoiding manipulation and perception. Such leaders ought to be candid about the setbacks, the mistakes, and the challenges that the organization faces. This helps foster environments that pride in trust. By having open dialogue with their subjects, leaders open the

doors to receive any criticism, compliments, and advice from all involved. This creates a new impetus in leadership and problem-solving.

Integrity demands the highest form of ethical practices and conduct on the part of the leader. Ethical leadership dictates that a leader ought to adhere to moral values and ethical principles even in the face of difficult situations. According to Lencioni (2002), leaders with integrity tend to prioritize whatever may have a positive impact on the organization over their personal and private lives. Moreover, such leaders hold themselves to high ethical standards. With such a trait, it becomes easy for such leaders to demand from their subjects proportionate cooperation in maintaining such high ethical standards, fostering an organizational culture that is conducive to development.

Integrity also forms the basis for consistency and reliability in any organization (Northouse, 2018). Integral leaders are reliable and consistent, both in their words and actions, hence earning trust and respect, not only from their followers but also from their peers. Moreover, leaders who exhibit this trait follow through on their commitments and honor any promise that they give. Maintaining a sense of integrity on all platforms, situations, and contexts helps leaders forge a positive environment for their subjects. In addition, consistency in behavior helps build credibility, thereby boosting an organization's stability.

Integrity breeds trustworthiness and accountability. This is essential for any effective leader as trust ensures a positive rapport among all actors. In practice, leaders who demonstrate integrity of the highest order tend to inspire confidence and loyalty in their subjects and team members for the reason that they can be relied upon to act fairly and honestly. Moreover, trust forms the basis for strong relationships, hence enabling teamwork and collaboration to flourish. On the other part, accountability ensures requires leaders take responsibility for their actions and

decisions, acknowledge mistakes, and come up with their solutions (Ostrom, 1998). Such leaders hold themselves accountable for what they stand for and seek feedback to enable them to put into practice mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement. Leaders who model accountability end up cultivating a culture of responsibility and ownership in an organization, a recipe for success.

## **Empathy**

Empathy is an essential trait for any effective leader who intends to bond well with their subjects. In common parlance, it entails understanding the emotions, experiences, and perspectives of others. A leader who demonstrates this trait fosters stronger connections and relations with their subjects and team members, helping promote a supportive work environment. Moreover, empathy helps enhance overall organizational performance.

As a positive trait, empathetic leaders understand their employees and subjects better. Such leaders can understand the challenges and weaknesses of their team members. Moreover, they tend to actively listen and pay attention to others, in addition to interpreting non-verbal cues and seeking to comprehend their feelings and motivations. Leaders who demonstrate empathy and genuine interest in the actions of their team members create a sense of psychological safety as individual team members feel valued, understood, and appreciated (Collins, 2001).

Bass (1985) posits that empathy promotes emotional intelligence in leaders as it encompasses self-regulation, self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship management. Leaders who exhibit this trait are adept at controlling and managing their emotions, in addition to recognizing the emotions of others. This enables them to navigate interpersonal dynamics effectively. In addition, they tend to respond empathetically to the needs of their subjects. Empathetic leaders are attuned to the morale and mood of the team. This attribute contributes positively to a positive atmosphere in an organization.

Empathy is a skill that promotes effective communication by encouraging leaders and followers to develop closeness with each other. Leaders who empathize communicate freely and openly, creating an environment in which emotions are shared by both parties. They validate the feelings and thoughts of others, take their views into account, and give them useful criticism in a positive way. Empathetic listening and response will help create a culture of easy communication, where ideas are exchanged without any hesitation and conflicts resolved amicably.

Covey (1989) stipulates that empathy builds interpersonal relations and gives a feeling of belongingness to the team. Empathetic leaders spend time and make an effort to develop meaningful relationships with their subordinates by showing concern for them. They invest time in understanding the employees as individuals learning their strengths, weaknesses dreams, and frustrations. Empathy and compassionate spirit that the leaders show a fundamental elements in building trust among team members hence high engagement, motivation as well and productivity.

### **Adaptability**

Leaders need to be adaptable because the current world has become a difficult place given its fast-paced nature. Leaders who are innovative, changeable, and learn from their mistakes will lead the team in an adaptive environment to success.

An adaptable leader is open to considering a wide range of options in their decision-making process. They realize that conditions can change quickly, and they ought to be ready to alter some of their plans and tactics. Rather than promoting a fixed strategy, adaptive leaders remain open to input and critique while pursuing alternatives that benefit the whole team.

Adaptability enables leaders to embrace change. Resilient leaders perceive change as an opportunity for development and creativity instead of a menace. However, they are proactive when adapting to changes in the external environment which may include shifts in market trends or

technological advancements and any other threats posed by competitors. On the contrary, adaptable leaders accept change readily and promote an optimistic attitude among team members to embrace challenges that come their way with enthusiasm and strength.

Maxwell (1993) posits that adaptability enhances continuous learning and development. Flexible leaders focus on continuous learning and development because their ability to change depends upon the willingness with which they acquire new knowledge, skills, and competencies. They look for opportunities to grow professionally such as through formal training programs, mentorships, and also self-directed learning initiatives. Through their self-investment, adaptive leaders lead by example and create a culture of continuing education among the people they manage.

Adaptability enables leaders to solve problems in their organizations (Hay, 2014). Flexible leaders are flexible in problem-solving, assessing the situation, and figuring out viable solutions counting on timely actions. They are good at improvisation and quickly adjusting to changing conditions under both unanticipated difficulties and unexpected losses. Rather than get stiffened by uncertainty or indecisiveness, flexible leaders respond to pressure with calm and cool reasonableness setting into other people's minds a sense of confidence and trust in their capacity for effective leadership.

In addition, adaptability improves resilience in the face of adversity. Moreover, a leader should be adaptable; one who is resilient and persistent in times of hardship. They are aware that there will be frustration coupled with failures during the leadership trip and hence, they see it as a chance to learn. Resilient leaders do not get frustrated when faced with challenges; they recover swiftly utilizing inner strength and willpower to work past problems as windblown by fate towards the intended end.

## **Communication Skills**

Communication is the cornerstone of successful leadership communication because it tends to promote a leader's vision; inspire people around him or her, encourage collaboration and thus create an effective environment that ensures organizational success.

The best leaders demonstrate clarity and conciseness in their communication being able to send clear messages that everyone from stakeholders can understand. They pronounce their thoughts, objectives, and aims in a direct style that makes use of no jargon or ambiguous language which might misunderstand the position (Greenleaf, 1970). Through clear communication, leaders eliminate confusion thereby creating agreement among the team members; hence ensuring that all people on board understand what is to be done.

Effective communication is not only about what one says but also about listening actively. Strong communication leaders listen well by capturing the perspective and posing questions of subordinates, considering their opinions as valuable. They focus on verbal and non-verbal clues, aiming to uncover the feelings as well as desires that are available or not visible via what is being invited. Through the technique of active listening, leaders create trusting connections with their associates; they can develop sound relationships and an atmosphere where openness is considered to be an inherent quality of communication.

Good communicators realize that presentations might need to be tailored according to different audiences. They adapt their message to the audiences' needs and preferences, by changing communication style tone, and content. For example, leaders who have good communication skills communicate well with the senior executives as crores strategies or frontline employees when formulating policies that are to be implemented on the ground. Finally, such



leadership is also effective in addressing a wider population outside of an organization-the external stakeholders

Communication does not only mean that information is transmitted but also it involves; comprehension and regulation of feelings. Emotionally intelligent leaders are sensitive to the emotions of other people and their style is characterized by communication with empathy, using the appropriate choice of words. They have a keen awareness of how their words and behaviour influence the emotional state of others, which in turn they want to be conveyed with due consideration. Leaders, by being empathetic and intelligent in their communication with the employees encourage trust to form better relations as well as loyalty is built.

### **Undesirable Traits for Christians in Public Leadership**

#### **Arrogance**

One of the negative attributes that characterize leadership and render it ineffective is arrogance which affects proper communication, relationships, and work within an organization never meeting required standards. The bigoted leaders possess exaggerated feelings of supremacy, consider themselves to be better than others as well as lack humility or sympathy.

Arrogant leaders do not bother to listen to the views and opinions of other people hence leading to poor team communication. Such leaders take control of the conversation, dismiss ideas offered by their teammates, and fail to tolerate other perspectives. The absence of open communication limits creativity, innovation, and problem-solving among team members as they might also be afraid to mention their suggestions or criticism.

Arrogant leaders are often unaware of the suffering or needs others have and as such, do not have their best interests at heart. They fail to listen carefully and respect the opinions of their team members, ignore replies or criticism, and instead pursue personal interests ahead of putting

the interest of a larger group. The absence of empathy breeds a toxic workplace culture in which employees feel disrespected, undervalued, and demotivated with consequent low morale levels and productivity.

Arrogant leaders feel criticism or providing feedback as an attack on their ego, and self-image and hence are repelled by such criticism. In turn, the fact that they make mistakes or have room for improvement, he or she may become defensive and pass the blame to other people to deny any responsibilities. This unconscious resistance to feedback makes it virtually impossible for a leader and an individual as well, to grow personally or professionally career-wise since one continues repeating the same mistakes over the years.

### **Dishonesty**

Dishonesty is a destructive attribute in leadership that kills trust, destroys relationships, and dissolves organizational morality. Leadership, based on dishonesty and cheating executives is doomed to failure.

Leadership relies on trust, and dishonesty explodes that foundation. Whenever leaders lie, whether choosing to not reveal crucial information; provide false assurances, or mislead others, they violate the confidence that their team members place in them as well as everyone who works with them (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). This distrust, in turn, negates the credibility of the leader and his/her power to elicit influence through other means.

Dishonesty ruins relationships in the organization since team members feel betrayed or deceived by their leaders. If trust is broken, communication falls apart and so collaborates with individuals who question the motives as well as intentions of their leaders. This stressful interpersonal relationship undermines teamwork, partnership, and enthusiasm which results in a poisonous environment that is full of suspicion and hostility.

Inadequate transparency is characteristic of dishonest leaders. Instead of providing honest and precise information to their team members as well as stakeholders, they may try withholding the information or conceal facts that are related. Even more worryingly; persons in such positions can manipulate data for their interests towards misleading individuals about it instead of being accurate on issues concerning them under any circumstances whatsoever gives a positive result when taken into consideration seriously. This lack of transparency leads to uncertainties, confusion, and distrust as people begin to ask themselves what the motives and intentions of the leader are.

Lack of integrity leads to a violation of ethical values. By placing the insistence on their interests above honesty and integrity, leaders establish a bad precedent for others to follow. Such an attitude promotes an ethical vacuum around oneself which is filled by unethical behavior either tolerated or even cultivates support from closely related fellows. This evil tendency could grimly follow the organization on all fronts starting from poor reputation, and discontentment of customers and stakeholders to legal claims and exposure.

### **Selfishness**

Selfishness undermines the team morale. Leaders who exhibit this trait focus on their personal growth or profit which harms the well-being of others. Where employees develop perceptions that their leader is all about success for oneself and not for the team, morale will inevitably dip. The members will harbor feelings of resentment and disillusion, which ultimately reduces their motivation, engagement levels as well as job satisfaction.

As a result of egoistic leadership, the leader puts individual success over collective goals thereby discouraging collaboration and teamwork within that organization. Divisions may appear, communication fails, and sharing knowledge is limited when leaders are more focused on self-

promoting their agenda or protecting individual personal interests than encouraging the facilitation of a collaborative organizational culture. This lack of collaboration also impedes innovation, creativity, and problem-solving since individuals are less likely to work together and learn from each other's strengths.

Selfishness destroys mutual trust among organizational members, as they may feel that their leader acts contrary to meeting his/her best interests. However, when leaders choose their interests or desires over the needs of any one of their team members trust is killed and the relationship will be hurt. This erodes team members' faith in the leader, makes them doubt his integrity rubbing salt in the wound on refusing to share information and if they keep a cupcake or are indifferent it wastes communication and leads to teams not achieving their potential.

Leaders who are driven by self-centered interests can make decisions that put forward their agenda instead of what is correct for the organization as a whole. Self-interest as a motive for leaders' decisions can either make them blind to the holistic influences on their operations or go into short-term benefits disregarding sustained effectiveness. This results in bad decision-making, missed chances, and lastly organizational failure.

### **The Rational Actor models and how traits can influence Rational Actor decision-making**

Rational Actor, or the rational Choice model is a set of analytical equipment that economics scholars trained in political science, sociology, and there other social sciences use to explain decision-making processes (Northouse, 2018). It says that people decide by calculating costs and benefits from possible alternatives they can take on for the one that delivers as much utility or satisfaction as chosen. Within this paradigm, people are modeled as rational actors with

preferences perfectly known and perfect information who make decisions logically based on those preferences.

**Key Assumptions of the Rational Actor Model include:**

Utility Maximization: People strive to attain utility or satisfaction by opting for the option that best conducts benefits over motion in contrast with relative worth.

Clear Preferences: People have obvious preferences and predetermined objectives that act as a composition factor of their decision-making process.

Perfect Information: There is full precise information about available choices and their consequences freely availed for the persons.

Consistency: Decisions are made according to preferences and objectives with no emotional content, regardless of biases.

Utility Calculation: Different people can determine the expected utility of each alternative and opt for that which offers them the highest average good.

**Assessment of How Traits Influence Rational Actor Decision-Making**

The Rational Actor model is quite appropriate as a conceptual framework for understanding the decision-making process, but we often have to remember that individual characteristics can greatly modify the realities of this form. Here's how various traits can impact decision-making within the Rational Actor model: The optimal water window condition is one in which the starting position and initial motion of an animal or other flying object are at a perfectly vertical angle.

Cognitive Biases: People can fall victim to cognitive bias seen as confirmation, availability, or anchoring; which cloud their perception of information resulting in distortion of how they perceive things and even initiate decision-making. For instance, when there are varying

points of view on a topic that would lead to the selection bias and tendencies brought by confirmation bias forwarding people's selective pursuit for information supported by such pre-existing beliefs or preferences rather than having all evidence objectively considered.

**Emotional Factors:** Emotions can have a major impact on decisions even from rational actors. Biological states play a role in determining human decisions – emotions such as fear, anger, or excitement change an individual's assessment of risk and reward causing people to behave irrationally from the cost-benefit point. For instance, when an individual is exposed to fear or anxiety they tend to be sacrilegious in nature hence avoiding potential chances that may prove helpful.

**Personality Traits:** Certain personality traits of an individual, such as openness to experience or conscientiousness might also determine the preference for decision-making and its tendencies. For instance, people high in conscientiousness might be more inclined to analyze the 'cost' and advantages of available options compared with those high neurotics who may have risk aversion or paralysis.

**Social Influence:** Social factors have a direct influence on any of the decisions we make in life; this is because anytime people are under duress that may be from peers or society itself, one would always bow down and decide to do things as others. In their decisions, individuals can choose in a certain way either adapting to what fits the preferences or expectations of their social group rather than being rational from the point where it would seem that this sort an individual maximizes direct utility. Social influence forces people to sacrifice their utility maximization for social acceptance or conformity.

In conclusion, exceptional leadership qualities come together to help leaders in engaging with their environments and colleagues during interactions as well as decision-making that influences the relations of these individuals towards their team members. Visionary leaders have

a picturized view of things to come and this brings joint venture into working with them. Integrity functions as one of the foundation stones in creating a trust that reinforces truthfulness, ethical behavior, and reliability in behavior. In cultivating good relationships, empathy also leads to effective conflict resolution as well as Reuser and respect of others' perspectives thus enabling one to work in a supportive environment. Adaptability equips leaders with the ability to respond dynamically throughout change and unpredictable times, ensuring a culture that is resistant yet dynamic. Communication skills enable people to communicate effectively, listening comprehensively and empathizing; openness provides understanding as well as infusing humanity into communication.

Quite contrary undesired characteristics like arrogance, deceitfulness, and self-centredness erode leadership efficacy en endanger organisational grounding. However, arrogance reduces connections and cooperation by taking the leader's desires over those of those in a group. Dishonesty corrupts trust and transparency reducing the effectiveness of decision-making with conduct that is not ethical. The selfishness damages teamwork and morale and curtails the working together of people hence a collaboration challenge.

Although the Rational Actor Model provides a model for decision-making, traits within each individual can pathologically influence this process. Within this model, cognitive biases, emotional factors and personality traits, social influence as well and contextual factors shape decision-making which brings up how complex human behavior can be about each difference in the leadership dynamics of an organization. For instance, leaders can positively change their traits by cultivating positive ones while minimizing negative behaviors to realize the effectiveness of leadership as a cultural factor in healthy organizations for sustainable success.





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