

The Future of Leadership

By Ann N. Gatty, Ph.D.



Leadership in the twenty first century continues to evolve to meet the demands of dramatically changing organizational structures. The organizational structure is being transformed to include decision making at all levels. Leadership capabilities are needed throughout organizational structures, not simply at the top tier levels. The leadership role is expanding to include team members, remote staff members, independent contractors, and stake holders.

However, there are certain leadership characteristics that make an individual more or less likely to succeed. Research on leadership continues to better understand which characteristics become more necessary and how are they being best utilized. It is important to keep in mind that each individual models his or her own unique leadership style. This style is based on the blending of experiences they bring to the situation, competencies they possess, and personality qualities they embrace.

Effective leadership does not come exclusively from contextual knowledge and competencies, but rather it also is derived from well-honed people-skills. Most people value competencies to get the job done but are equally drawn to leaders who demonstrate authenticity and are friendly and respectful of others.



STUDIES SHOW THAT TECHNICAL SKILLS, INTELLIGENCE, EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE ACCOUNTS FOR 15% OF WORKPLACE SUCCESS. 85% OF WORKPLACE SUCCESS COMES FROM PEOPLE SKILLS!

Leadership characteristics can be divided into two categories. Those of strength and those of warmth. Again, the strength characteristics are most often sought after in job interviews and delineated on resumes, but the warmth characteristics prove extremely important as one moves into top tier leadership positions.

How do we define strength characteristics?

Traits that are associated with leadership strength include individual intelligence, problem solving ability, strategic perspectives, technical and professional expertise, goal setting, time management and analytic capabilities. When considering areas of professional development, individuals often look to improve these strength characteristics. There is a sense that boosting one's expertise can lead to promotions and higher leadership positions. However, we see that this set of characteristics used alone, has its limitations.

How do we define warmth characteristics?

Traits that are associated with leadership warmth include an individual's trustfulness, empathy, respect for others, social support, honesty, approachability, collaboration, ability to inspire, and effective communication. Individuals notice the warmth characteristics first when forming initial impressions of a person. When defining the effectiveness of a leader, individuals often cite warmth characteristics as being most important. Warmth characteristics can be learned through situational application—not something learned in formal classroom settings. It becomes how an individual performs. The tone of a person's voice, the authentic smile, validation of another's feelings all indicate how one is interacting with another.

How will the digital age affect leadership?

Leaders will be navigating a dynamically fast-paced digital age. Working in this environment causes leaders to make decisions with less time and across virtual landscapes. The global community will continue to shrink and a reliance on collaborating teams will increase. With this quickened pace, innovation will be key to keeping one step ahead and living with ambiguity will become the norm. Leaders who rely on concrete evidence for decision-making will find themselves falling behind. Learning to work with intuition will be necessary.

In this new era of business there is a growing expectation of conscious capitalism. No longer are businesses solely focused on profit, there is the expectation that businesses also will focus on improving their communities along with building their businesses. The new generation of talent entering our workforce today want to make a positive impact on society and pursue work that has a meaningful purpose. Leaders will necessarily be expected to incorporate purpose into the business plan and effectively communicate that purpose as part of the business vision.

There continues to be a growing importance in teaching skills

Effective leaders need to be learning all the time. To maintain a competitive advantage, leaders must have the capability to learn and adapt to changes as they occur. More importantly, leaders must hone their teaching skills because the talent pool is shrinking and the need to retain quality talent will become more intense. One way to retain talent is to build an organization with continuous learning opportunities and personal growth opportunities built in.

Leadership etiquette will rise in importance.

In our world today, have you noticed that our daily pace seems to be accelerating as more information continues to bombard us through emails, internet, text messages, and telephone calls! If individuals are not mindful, the personal connections will be lost in the fray. With this fast-paced lifestyle, etiquette takes on more importance. Answering emails in a timely fashion is a must. If someone asks a question via text messaging, the internet, or email, they deserve an answer. Proper etiquette translates to being courteous and leaders need such a trait if they want to build trust and camaraderie. Remember that the talent pool is shrinking. Talent retention will continue to grow in importance. Proper etiquette sends a vital message that you respect those with whom you interact.

Leadership in the 21st century will continue to evolve as organizations shift the ways they interact with society. Embracing change, enjoying the journey and savoring the opportunities to work in collaboration will make the learning process that much rewarding.

About the Author

Dr. Ann Gatty is a business development strategist. She helps her clients clarify the vision for their businesses, boost their leadership capabilities and add quality talent to help the clients reach their goals. Through a collaborative mentoring process, she and her clients create workable strategic business plans and success initiatives, while improving their workplace processes. Dr. Gatty is a frequent writer and contributor www.AllBusiness.com, www.MarketInsiders.com, and www.WomenOnBusiness.com. Her interactive speaking engagements assist participants in discovering new-found talents and skills that they can immediately apply in the workplace. Join her [Facebook Group, Strategic Thinking Summit Elites](#) for strategies you can implement to grow your business success and enjoy camaraderie with others entrepreneur members.