INTRODUCTION TO LEADERSHIP TRAITS

Whether you want to be a CEO of a Fortune 500 company, an NFL quarterback, an executive director of a prestigious nonprofit, a conductor of a world famous orchestra, or the President of the United States, leadership is important to effectively lead a group of people or an organization. The following 14 leadership traits are qualities that if demonstrated daily will help you earn the respect, confidence, and loyal cooperation of others.

JUSTICE: Justice is the practice of being fair and consistent. A just person gives consideration to each side of a situation, and gives rewards and punishments impartially and consistently. Be honest with yourself about why you make a particular decision. Avoid favoritism. Try to be fair at all times and treat all matters and people in an equal manner. The quality of displaying fairness and impartiality is critical in order to gain the trust and respect of others.

JUDGEMENT: Judgement is the ability to make considered decisions or come to sensible conclusions. More precisely, it is the ability to weigh factors and possible solutions (courses of action) to make sound decisions. Sound judgement allows a leader to make the right decision. Accordingly, think about things clearly, calmly, and methodically so that you can make good decisions. Avoid making rash decisions. Use common sense to solve problems.

DEPENDABILITY: Dependability means that you can be relied upon with certainty to perform your responsibilities properly, and trusted to complete a job. In short, it means you are trustworthy and reliable. Form the habit of being where you are supposed to be on time, not making excuses, and carrying out every assignment to the best of your ability regardless of whether you like it or agree with it. Dependability goes hand in hand with promptness and responsibility. It also includes an element of adaptability which embraces innovation and resourcefulness in adapting to the realities, situations and circumstances of the environment.

INITIATIVE: Initiative is the ability to assess a situation and initiate actions independently. It means that you act or take charge before others do to resolve a difficulty or improve a situation. Simply said, when something needs to get done, you take action in the absence of orders. Always stay mentally and physically alert. Be aware of things that need to get done and do them without having to be told.

DECISIVENESS: Decisiveness is the ability to make decisions quickly and effectively. It means meeting new and unexpected situations with prompt action. Get all the facts, and calmly but quickly arrive at a decision. It is often better that a decision be made promptly than a potential better one be made at the expense of more time. Announce your decisions in a clear, firm, and diplomatic manner. Practice being firm in your actions instead of acting half-hearted or changing your mind on an issue.

TACT: Tact is the ability to sensitively deal with others or with difficult issues without creating hostility and in a manner that will avoid offense. Courtesy and sensitivity must be accorded to all and at all occasions. This deference must be extended under all conditions regardless of true feelings. The quality of consistently treating others with respect and courtesy is a sign of maturity. Tact allows commands, guidance, and opinions to be expressed effectively.
INTEGRITY: Integrity is the quality of being honest and truthful in what you do or say. Having impeccable integrity means having honorable character and sound moral principles. At all times, stand up for what you believe to be right, and put your moral principles above all else. Nothing less than complete honesty in all of your dealings with subordinates, peers, and superiors is acceptable.

ENTHUSIASM: Enthusiasm is defined as a sincere interest and intense energy in performing one’s responsibilities. Displaying interest in a task and optimism that it can be successfully completed greatly enhances the likelihood that the task will be successfully completed. Be willing to accept challenges. Understand why it’s valuable that something gets done.

BEARING: Bearing is the way you conduct and carry yourself. Your manner should reflect alertness, competence, confidence, and control. At all times, create a favorable impression in carriage, appearance, and personal conduct. Bearing gives you the ability to look, talk, and act like a leader whether or not these manifestations indicate one’s true feelings.

UNSELFISHNESS: Unselfishness is defined as willing to put the needs or wishes of others before your own. Avoid providing for your own comfort and personal advancement at the expense of others. Give credit to those who deserve it. Consider the needs and wishes of others. The quality of looking out for the needs of your subordinates before your own is the essence of leadership.

COURAGE: Courage is the mental quality that recognizes fear of danger or criticism, but enables a person to proceed in the face of it with calmness and firmness. Moral courage is standing up for what is right, even in the face of popular disfavor. A leader must act from the courage of their convictions, even when a position runs counter to popular opinion. Moral courage is required to make the difficult decisions. Whatever your fear may be, control it by practicing self-discipline and calmness. Accept responsibility when something is your fault.

KNOWLEDGE: Knowledge is the understanding, awareness or familiarity of a particular subject gained by study, observation, or experience. Your knowledge should be broad. Study various types of literature. Listen, observe, and find out about things you don’t understand. Knowledge is important for your development. It helps you achieve technical proficiency and readiness for action, which builds your decision-making confidence.

LOYALTY: Loyalty is the quality of being loyal to someone or something. It means you have a strong feeling of allegiance to your superiors, peers, and subordinates, and dutifully support them. Never discuss confidential matters with others. Never talk unfavorably about your superiors. Once a decision is made, carry out that decision willingly as if it were your own.

ENDURANCE: Endurance is the power of persevering an unpleasant or difficult process or situation without giving way. Stated differently, it is the mental and physical stamina measured by one’s ability to withstand pain, fatigue, stress, and hardship. What all successful leaders have in common is strength of will that enables them to face the most challenging of tasks. Finish every assignment to the best of your ability by forcing yourself to continue when you are physically tired and your mind is sluggish. The exact limits of endurance cannot be determined, but physical conditioning is one method of reducing the effects of physical exertion, and it can increase individual self-confidence and reduce stress.