

Influence. How do you cultivate it?

Do you want to be a more influential leader? Adopt these top 10 characteristics that all successful leaders possess.

Elizabeth Ruske



According to author [Steve Graves](#): "Influence is a person's ability to shape people and mold outcomes. Influence is morally neutral (can be used for good or evil), but it always involves both relationships and results." When I read that definition, I am drawn to the phrase ... 'the ability to shape people and mold outcomes', indeed, those are critical leadership skills to cultivate.

Today, more than ever before, it is critical that leaders know how to apply their influence to situations, relationships, and results. Thankfully, gone are the days of command and control leadership styles and the practice of delivering results on the backs of your employees. Successful leaders and companies recognize the need to have the capacity to integrate ideas, inspiration, and input from multiple resources to cultural, industry, and marketing challenges.

When I look at powerful, positive, and influential leaders they all do several things consistently well.

Top 10 Characteristics of an Influential Leader

- **Have a Vision.** They focus on what's possible and are forward thinking about where we are going.
- **Inspire Others and Enroll Them in Their Vision.** Like Simon Sinek reminds us, they [focus on the why!](#) They shift from trying to do it all themselves to seeking out others to share the vision.
- **Know Who They Are.** They are aware of who they are, know their strengths and weaknesses, and how they work best.
- **Cultivate 360-degree Stakeholder Connections.** They understand the importance of relationships at every level and invite others to share in shaping the outcomes to co-own the vision.
- **Listen More than they Talk.** It's not about giving direction, rather they create high levels of engagement by role modeling creativity and collaboration.
- **Seek Diverse Perspectives.** Practicing [inclusive leadership](#), they seek out differing points of views. (Consider this analogy of looking at all sides of a [beachball](#).)
- **Encourage Critical Thinking.** They ask the tough questions, ensure we know what success looks like, and anticipate issues and problems, and when necessary, remove potential barriers.
- **Produce Results by Leveraging Strengths.** Being a good judge of talent, they know how to bring in the right people with the right skills and talents, at the right time.
- **Hold others Graciously Accountable.** A [study](#) conducted by Overfield and Kaiser, found that 1 of every 2 managers are terrible at holding others accountable. Gallup suggests this is a key to increasing employee engagement. But how you hold them accountable is critical – gracious accountability is key.
- **Actively Mentor, Sponsor, and Advocate for Others.** Influential leaders proactively use their political capital to help others and open their networks to help others advance.

We believe holding others graciously accountable inspires greatness, empowers teams, and produces great results. So if you want to be a more influential leader, hold your staff more accountable –*with grace*- and watch them rise to the challenge.

Now that's creating a positive influence!