

What is Leadership

A Selection of Leadership Definitions

Definitions of Leadership

- **The presence of a particular influence relationship between two or more persons** (Hollander & Julian, 1969).
- **Directing and coordinating the work of group members** (Fiedler, 1967).
- **The creative and directive force of morale** (Munson, 1921).
- **The process by which an agent induces a subordinate to behave in a desired manner** (Bennis, 1959).

Definitions of Leadership

- **An interpersonal relation in which others comply because they want to, not because they have to** (Merton, 1969; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994).
- **Transforming followers, creating visions of the goals that may be attained, and articulating for the followers the ways to attain those goals** (Bass, 1985; Tichy & Devanna, 1986).
- **The process of influencing an organized group toward accomplishing its goals** (Roach & Behling, 1984).
- **Actions that focus resources to create desirable opportunities** (Campbell, 1991).
- **The leader's job is to create conditions for the team to be effective** (Ginnett, 1996).

Definitions of Leadership

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- **"...leadership is like the Abominable Snowman, whose footprints are everywhere but who is nowhere to be seen"** Bennis & Nanus: 'Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge' (1997)
- **"[There are] almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept."** Stogdill (1974, p.259)
- **"A leader is a dealer in hope."** Napoleon Bonaparte, French soldier, statesman, revolutionary (1769-1821)
- **"A leader is best when people barely know that he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worst when they despise him. 'Fail to honour people' they fail to honour you. But of a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will all say, 'We did this ourselves.'" Lao Tzu, Chinese founder of Taoism, author (6th Century BC)**

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- **"A leader shapes and shares a vision which gives point to the work of others."** Charles Handy (1992)
- **"A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be."** Rosalynn Carter, US First Lady (b.1927)
- **"As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others."** Bill Gates
- **"Be willing to make decisions. That's the most important quality in a good leader."** General George S. Patton Jr.

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- **"Leaders are individuals who establish direction for a working group of individuals who gain commitment form these group of members to this direction and who then motivate these members to achieve the direction's outcomes."** Conger, J.A. 'Learning to Lead' San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (1992, p18)
- **"Leaders are those who consistently make effective contributions to social order, and who are expected and perceived to do so."** Hosking (1988, p.153)
- **"Leadership (according to John Sculley) revolves around vision, ideas, direction, and has more to do with inspiring people as to direction and goals than with day-to-day implementation. A leader must be able to leverage more than his own capabilities. He must be capable of inspiring other people to do things without actually sitting on top of them with a checklist."** Bennis, VV. 'On Becoming a Leader' Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing, (1989, p.139)
- **"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."** John F. Kennedy

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- **"Leadership is a combination of strategy and character. If you must be without one, be without the strategy."** Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf
- **"Leadership is a development of a clear and complete system of expectations in order to identify evoke and use the strengths of all resources in the organization the most important of which is people."** Batten, J.D. 'Tough-minded Leadership' New York: AMACOM (1989 p.35)
- **"Leadership is a function of knowing yourself, having a vision that is well communicated, building trust among colleagues, and taking effective action to realize your own leadership potential."** Warren Bennis
- **"Leadership is a process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose."** Jacobs & Jaques (1990, p.281)

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- **"Leadership is a process of influence between a leader and those who are followers."** Hollander (1978, p.1)
- **"Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal."** Northouse (2004, p.3)
- **"Leadership is an attempt at influencing the activities of followers through the communication process and toward the attainment of some goal or goals."** Donnelly, J.H. & Ivancevich, J.M. & Gibson, J.L. 'Organizations: behavior, structure, processes 5th Ed.' Plano, TX: Business Publications Inc. (1985 p362.)
- **"Leadership is an influence process that enable managers to get their people to do willingly what must be done, do well what ought to be done."** Cribbin, J.J. 'Leadership: strategies for organizational effectiveness' New York: AMACOM (1981)

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- **"Leadership is defined as the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement."** Rauch & Behling (1984, p.46)
- **"Leadership is discovering the company's destiny and having the courage to follow it."** Joe Jaworski - Organizational Learning Center at MIT.
- **"Leadership is influence - nothing more, nothing less."** John Maxwell, 1998
- **"Leadership is interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals."** Tannenbaum, Weschler & Massarik (1961, p.24)

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- **"Leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good."** Joanne Ciulla (1998)
- **"Leadership is that process in which one person sets the purpose or direction for one or more other persons and gets them to move along together with him or her and with each other in that direction with competence and full commitment."** Jaques E. & Clement, S.D. 'Executive Leadership: a practical guide to managing complexity' Cambridge, MA: Carson-Hall & Co. Publishers (1994, p.4)
- **"Leadership is the accomplishment of a goal through the direction of human assistants. A leader is one who successfully marshals his human collaborators to achieve particular ends."** Prentice, W.C.H. 'Understanding Leadership' Harvard Business Review September/October 1961 vol. 39 no. 5 p.143.
- **"Leadership is the art of influencing others to their maximum performance to accomplish any task, objective or project."** Cohen, W.A. 'The Art of a Leader' Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall (1990, p.9)

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- **"Leadership is the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations."** Kouzes, J.M. & Posner, B.Z. 'The Leadership Challenge' San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (1995, p.30)
- **"Leadership is the behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal."** Hemphill & Coons (1957, p.7)
- **"Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality."** Warren G. Bennis
- **"Leadership is the incremental influence that a person has beyond his or her formal authority."** (Vecchio, 1988)
- **"Leadership is the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization."** Katz & Kahn (1978, p.528)

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- **"Leadership is the initiation and maintenance of structure in expectation and interaction."** Stogdill (1974, p.411)
- **"Leadership may be considered as the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement."** Stogdill, (1950, p.3)
- **"Leadership requires using power to influence the thoughts and actions of other people."** Zelenik, A. 'Managers and Leaders: are they different?', Harvard Business Review March/April 1992 p.126.
- **"Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall."** Stephen R. Covey

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- **"People ask the difference between a leader and a boss. ...The leader works in the open, and the boss in covert. The leader leads, and the boss drives."** Theodore Roosevelt
- **"The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind in others the conviction and will to carry on."** Walter Lippman
- **"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor. That sums up the progress of an artful leader."** Max DePree
- **"The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers."** Ralph Nadar

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- **"The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership."** Harvey S. Firestone
- **"The job of the leader is to speak to the possibility."** Benjamin Zander, British conductor, management presenter (b.1939)
- **"The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority."** Kenneth Blanchard, US management author, presenter (b.1939)
- **"The only definition of a leader is someone who has followers."** The Drucker Foundation, 1996

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- **"You manage things, you lead people."** Admiral Grace Murray Hooper, US naval officer (1906-1992)
- **"A leader is the person in a group who directs and coordinates task-oriented group activities."** Fiedler (1967)
- **"Leaders are those who consistently make effective contributions to social order and who are expected and perceived to do so."** Hosking (1988)
- **"Leadership is a social process in which one individual influences the behaviour of others without the use of threat or violence."** Buchanan and Huczynski (1997, p.606)

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- **"Leadership is about articulating visions, embodying values, and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished."** Richards and Engle (1986)
- **"Leadership is the ability to step outside the culture to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive."** Schein (1992)
- **"Leadership is the creation of a vision about a desired future state which seeks to enmesh all members of an organisation in its net."** Bryman (1986, p. 6)
- **"Leadership is the lifting of a man's vision to higher sights, the raising of a man's performance to a higher standard, the building of a man's personality beyond its normal limitations."** Drucker, P. F. (1955)

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- **"Leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation."** Hersey, P. & Blanchard, K. 'Management of Organizational Behavior'. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall (1988 p. 86)
- **"Leadership is the process of making sense of what people are doing together so that people will understand and be committed."** Drath & Palus (1994)
- **"Leadership: the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."** Dwight D Eisenhower (1890 - 1969) US Statesman
- **"One of the hardest tasks of leadership is understanding that you are not what you are, but what you're perceived to be by others."** Edward L. Flom, CEO of the Florida Steel Corporation, in a speech, May 6, 1987.

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- **"Leadership is all hype. We've had three great leaders in this century - Hitler, Stalin and Mao."** Peter Drucker, quoted in Fortune, 21/02/94
- **"Leadership is an intangible quality with no clear definition. That's probably a good thing, because if the people who were being led knew the definition, they would hunt down their leaders and kill them."** Scott Adams, The Dilbert Principle (1996)
- **"Leadership: The capacity and will to rally people to a common purpose together with the character that inspires confidence and trust"** Field Marshal Montgomery
- **"A Leader: A person responsible for achieving objectives through others by creating the conditions in which they may be successful and for building and maintaining the team that he or she is a member of."** Jeremy Tozer

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- "**Leadership is a purposeful relationship, which occurs episodically among participants, who use their individual skills in influence, to advocate transforming change.**" (c) Michael S. Kearns, 2005
- "**Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.**" Joseph Rost, *Leadership in the 21st Century*, (1993, p.102)
- "**A chief is a man who assumes responsibility. He says 'I was beaten', he does not say 'my men were beaten'.**" Antoine de St. Exupery
- "**If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.**" Antoine de St. Exupery

Definition of a Leader

A leader is a person with

- A God-given capacity
- A God-given responsibility to *influence*
- A specific group of God's people
- Toward God's purposes for the group

Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*

Leadership Vs.. Management

- In trying to answer "What is leadership?" it is natural to look at the relationship between leadership and management.
- To many, the word **management** suggests words like *efficiency, planning, paperwork, procedures, regulations, control, and consistency*.
- **Leadership** is often more associated with words like *risk taking, dynamic, creativity, change, and vision*. Some say leadership is fundamentally a value-choosing, and thus a value-laden, activity, whereas management is not. Leaders are thought to *do the right things*, whereas managers are thought to *do things right* (Bennis, 1985; Zaleznik, 1983). Here are some other distinctions between managers and leaders (Bennis, 1989):

Leadership Vs. Management

- Managers administer; leaders innovate.
- Managers maintain; leaders develop.
- Managers control; leaders inspire.
- Managers have a short-term view; leaders, a long-term view.
- Managers ask how and when; leaders ask what and why.
- Managers imitate; leaders originate.
- Managers accept the status quo; leaders challenge it.