



Management Support Unit (MSU)



Information Sheet 7: Qualities for good leadership

Warren Bennis argues that leadership is “probably one of the most studied and least understood of any management subject.” One of his favourite definitions of leadership is “the capacity to create a compelling vision, translate it into action and sustain it. “Managers do things right, leaders do the right things”¹

There are many qualities that make a good leader and the old debate as to whether leaders are made or born, continues today. The truth probably lies somewhere in between. While personality types might vary, there are many positive leadership traits that can be taught. Over the last few years, leadership courses have been developed in order to teach those skills and the list below is an example of some of these. It is not intended to be all inclusive but is a guide only.

An effective leader of a community organisation:

Provides leadership, direction and guidance to the organisation by:

1. Creating and conveying a clear vision on the future direction
2. Initiating and driving through change and managing that process perceptively
3. Taking final responsibility for the actions of the team
4. Establishing and communicating clear standards and expectations
5. Demonstrating resilience, stamina and reliability under heavy pressure
6. Demonstrating the high standards of integrity, honesty and fairness
7. Choosing between options, taking into account the long term consequences

Facilitates meetings and group discussions by:

1. Choosing methods of communication most likely to secure effective results
2. Encouraging creative thinking on others

Maintains effective networks by:

1. Knowing how to find and use other sources of expertise
2. Applying best practice in dealings with other organisations

¹B. Warren & R. Townsend, *Reinventing Leadership*, Judy Piatkus Ltd UK

Effectively represents the organisation by:

1. Taking a firm stance when circumstances warrant
2. Effectively negotiating deals
3. Communicating in a concise and persuasive manner

Manages risk and resolves conflict within the organisation and between the organisation and other parties by:

1. Acting decisively after having assessed the situation

Understands and articulates the context in which the service operates by:

1. Understanding parliamentary and political processes and how to operate within them

Promotes the organisation by:

1. Establishing a profile for the service and marketing that service
2. Demonstrating presentational and media skills

Designs and implements a promotional strategy by:

1. Choosing the methods of communication most likely to secure effective results

Models organisational relationships based on trust and respect for all stakeholder groups by:

1. Being visible, approachable and earning respect
2. Inspiring and showing loyalty
3. Taking steps to building trust, demonstrating high morals and being co-operative
4. Communicating effectively with the Chair and Board members

Provides leadership that engenders a collective sense of identity and purpose of direction by:

1. Carrying forward decisions of the board and managing relationships between staff and board.

Manages and improves the performance of individuals and teams by:

1. Building a high performing team
2. Addressing poor performance

Supports and develops staff by:

1. Consulting staff/volunteers and identifying training needs in order to develop their full potential
2. Seeking face to face contact and responding to feedback from staff

Develops effective leadership roles by:

1. Delegating decisions appropriately, making best use of skills and resources within the team and outside the team.

Relevant Resources available from the Management Support Unit (MSU)

- **MSU Information Sheet 2** A Code of Conduct for Boards of Management of Incorporated Non-Government Organisations (Free)
- **MSU Information Sheet 4** A Code of Conduct for Executive Officers of Voluntary Organisations (Free)
- **MSU Information Sheet 5** Attracting New Board Members (Free)
- **MSU Information Sheet 6** Ensuring a productive relationship between Board Members and the Executive Officer (Free)
- *Appraising the Chief Executive: an essential guide to performance review* ACEVO London 2002 (Loan)
- *Codes of Conduct and Service Agreements for CEOs* ACEVO London (Loan)
- *Leading the Organisation – the relationship between chair and chief executive* ACEVO London 2002 (Loan)

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