

Developing Leadership Competencies

Is a leader born or made? An interesting question. I am convinced that if a person has the mindset to become a good leader they can. But, what defines effective leadership skills and how are those skills applied? Breaking down what leadership means can help you answer this question. Here are some leadership competencies that define what it takes to be an effective leader and how those competencies can be applied.

Professional
Self Confidence
Adaptability
Organizational Awareness

Development of Others
Effective Communicator
Team Builder
Life Long Learner

Leaders are **professional** in every aspect, including the way they talk, the way they dress, and how they conduct business. A good leader has **self-confidence** and engages in action, decision-making, projects a professionalism and embraces challenges. A good leader must exhibit **adaptability** to emerging situations, use creative problem solving techniques, adapts strategically as necessary, and fosters respect and appreciation of people's differences. Good leaders demonstrate an **organizational awareness** taking into account the organizational culture, vision, values, informal alliances, internal politics and the big picture issues when taking actions.

A competent leader will **develop others** by communicating confidence and faith in other people's abilities, provides genuine consistent feedback; shares expertise and knowledge, spends time getting to know and supporting others including employees, and customers. Of course, **effective communication skills** are an important part of competent leadership. A good leader has developed a personally engaging communication style, communicates messages and expectations clearly, practices inquiry, notices nonverbal cues, actively listens, and strives to understand and learn from others' perspectives. In **teambuilding** the competent leader communicates optimistic expectations, facilitates input, demonstrates follow through and keeps commitments, expresses value in diversity, supports team members and engages in team spirit activities. Being a leader also means being a student and therefore, a competent leader is a **life long learner**, striving toward professional and personal development and self evaluation. We all can provide leadership in our current positions by applying these defined competencies. You may surprise your colleagues and immediate supervisors, as well as yourselves!

“The most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born – that there is a genetic factor to leadership. This myth asserts that people simply either have certain charismatic qualities or not. That's nonsense, in fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born.” Warren G. Bennes, Author and Distinguished Research Fellow, Harvard Business School.

By: Marilyn Alleman, L.C.S.W., C.P.C.
Email: mwallemann@hotmail.com