



Leadership Characteristics

Can it Impact Team Building?

It is a sure bet that the majority of leaders who once were line employees just knew they could outperform their former leader in a heartbeat. We all thought the job would entail giving directions, pushing paper and attending meetings. Little did we know what was really involved behind the scenes: the stress and hours expended to be successful in your career plus ensuring your team is also successful by providing them the support and tools they need to accomplish their jobs efficiently.

As a leader in today's workplace you are also faced with a diverse workforce and a taunting task of blending pre-boomers, baby boomers, Gen-X and Gen-Y into one team working for the same cause. The biggest challenge you face is recognizing and utilizing your people skills to work with the varied cultures and generations, knowing their likes, dislikes and how to mentor and encourage them to work together as one team with one vision.

What are the key characteristics to lead you ask?

Although every leader develops their own style and traits through family events, mentoring, education and years of experience, there are key leadership principles and values that hold steadfast over the years. These principles form the foundation for gaining mutual respect within your team and are key to creating a team atmosphere.

At Raytheon the starting point are the values we live by each day: honesty, ethics, respect, integrity, diversity and trust. Being honest, ethical and trustworthy with yourself and others, particularly when no one is looking, builds respect and trust between you and your team members. As my parents always said "remember to always treat others as you yourself wish to be treated," sound advice that I still follow each day.

Respecting and valuing diversity is a critical component and you must create an environment in which all ideas are not only allowed, but encouraged; where different accents are not only respected but enjoyed; where different appearances and generations and ways of working are not only accepted; but valued.

What are the keys to team building?

With a sound base to work from you can now begin to utilize management qualities key to building a cohesive team. First and foremost is open communication with each member of your team. Be sure you listen carefully, have two-way conversations and always be open to new and innovative approaches. Dominating the conversation, not listening, and taking constructive criticism personally will close the lines of communication.

Second is a positive mindset and enthusiasm throughout the course of an assignment especially when difficulties arise or you encounter negative thinkers or those who lack commitment. Remember, all eyes are on you as a leader and your team will take notice of how you handle the situation at hand.

Third, encourage your team to engage in problem-solving by basing their solutions on facts and data, then empower them to make decisions and necessary changes. This approach builds individual and team confidence, instills collaboration between team members and creates a sense of ownership of the end result.

Fourth, never take credit for your teams accomplishments; always give credit where credit is due. As a leader you play a support role to lend advice, guidance and commitment to help the team by stepping in and performing any task that needs to be completed. By showing your willingness to do whatever the team needs to help them become successful, you will gain your teams respect and support.

Fifth, lead by example; no one wants to follow a leader who says one thing and then does another. If you walk the talk, as they say, your team will rally behind you and believe in what you say and what you ask them to accomplish. Again, this goes back to honesty and integrity and you, as a leader, need to display these traits at all times.



Sixth, if you don't know the answer, say so. If you are asked a question and don't know what to say or don't have an answer, then simply say "I don't know." Maybe you should know the answer, but if you don't know, say so. Learn for the next time or even better yet volunteer to get the answer. In addition, don't be afraid to admit when you make a mistake; you are human after all and not perfect. Your team will respect you for being up front and not acting as though you have all the answers and never make mistakes. Lastly, you will be challenged with defining a clear vision of what the future should look like and a path to accomplishing the end goal. At Raytheon we approach strategic visioning by pulling together a team that represents a good cross section of an organization. Start by defining the core values that the team feels are necessary in building a team. As I mentioned before, it all starts with a sound base to build on and core values are key.

Next define your organizations core purpose for being; what are the services the team provides, what value do they provide your company as well as your customers and how can your team help your company become successful, to mention a few. Defining a core purpose will help your team create a vision statement that will keep you focused on the end results.

With your values, core purpose defined and a vision statement in place you are now ready to look at your current state. This step will map where you are today and will be the base to work from in mapping how to achieve your end goal. At this point you will chose what Raytheon calls Key Result Areas or KRAs. A KRA is a category of improvement opportunities such as customer satisfaction, growth, people or productivity. As a team you will identify specific areas you will need to improve to accomplish your end goal.

This step of identifying KRAs is critical. For example, in looking at people as a KRA, you might identify areas such as knowledge depth, training, empowerment, mentoring or communication as areas where you need to define specific improvement plans. These improvement areas might include establishing an organization-wide training program to increase skill sets or possibly creating a career development program to guide team members in career progression.

Next you will define a timeline to work towards in the near term, two to five years and long term of five to seven years, depending

on the scope of improvement areas. Once your timeline is completed, you will prioritize your KRAs and assign teams to begin developing a deployment plan to accomplish the end goal. This is where the real challenge begins. You will need to have committed team members working those tasks that have a vested interest or burning desire in making it happen.

Once you have your final plans developed you will need to communicate the results throughout your organization. Be sure to express the burning need to accomplish the end goal. Tie your end goal to your company's short and long-term objectives and show how your goals will help not only your organization, but how it aligns with the company's vision as well. The key is to provide continual communication on your progress towards accomplishing your end goals. You must keep your goals in the forefront; communicate successes as well as areas you fall short.

As you can see, and I'm sure you have experienced, there are many different approaches to leadership. If you follow the steps outlined and make adjustments according to your teams generational and cultural makeup you can build a strong and cohesive team. You will know when you have succeeded as a leader when your team is self-sufficient and your day-to-day guidance is needed less often.

As William Feather, American author and publisher once stated, "Next to doing a good job yourself, the greatest joy is in having your team do a first class job under your direction." Remember, you will enjoy great satisfaction by helping develop and mentor a winning team that is empowered and energized to succeed.

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