

Tips for Becoming a Better Leader

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How would you describe a strong leader? In one study, leadership qualities such as assertiveness, adaptability, intelligence, and conscientiousness were cited as the most important.

"Research clearly shows that transformational leaders—leaders who are positive, inspiring, and who empower and develop followers—are better leaders," explains psychologist and leadership expert Ronald E. Riggio. "They are more valued by followers and have higher performing teams."

So what can you do embrace these valued leadership qualities and become a stronger and more effective leader? Transformational leaders are usually described as enthusiastic, passionate, genuine and energetic. These leaders are not just concerned about helping the group achieve its goals; they also care about helping each member of the group reach his or her full potential.

Consider some of the following tips for how to become a better leader and think about ways that you can implement these strategies in your daily life.

1 Start By Understanding Your Leadership Style

Understanding your current leadership style is essential. What are your strengths? Which areas need some improvement? One way to start assessing your skills is to take a leadership style quiz to get a general idea of how you lead.

Once you have completed the quiz, read about the major characteristics of your dominant style. Are these qualities helping or hindering your leadership? Once you've determined which areas need some work, you can begin looking for ways to improve your leadership abilities.

2 Encourage Creativity

Intellectual stimulation is one of the leadership qualities that defines transformational leadership. Followers need to be encouraged to express their creativity. Effective leaders should offer new challenges with ample support to achieve these goals.

One way to foster creativity is to offer challenges to group members, making sure that the goals are within the grasp of their abilities. The purpose of this type of exercise is to get people to stretch their limits but not become discouraged by barriers to success.

3 Serve as a Role Model

Idealized influence is another of the four key components of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders exemplify the behaviors and characteristics that they encourage in their followers. They walk the walk and talk the talk. As a result, group members admire these leaders and work to emulate these behaviors. If you want to become a better leader, work on modeling the qualities that you would like to see in your team members.

4 Be Passionate

Would you look to someone for guidance and leadership if they did not truly care about the goals of the group? Of course not! Great leaders are not just focused on getting group members to finish tasks; they have a genuine passion and enthusiasm for the projects they work on.

You can develop this leadership quality by thinking of different ways that you can express your zeal. Let people know that you care about their progress. When one person shares something with the rest of the group, be sure to tell them how much you appreciate such contributions.

5 Listen and Communicate Effectively

Another important quality of transformational leadership involves a focus on providing one-on-one communication with group members. Good leaders should express sincere care and concern for the members of their group both verbally and nonverbally.

By keeping the lines of communication open, these leaders can ensure that group members feel able to make contributions and receive recognition for their achievements.

6 Have a Positive Attitude

Transformational leaders have an upbeat, optimistic attitude that serves as a source of inspiration for followers. If leaders seem discouraged or apathetic, members of the group are likely to also become uninspired.

Even when things look bleak and your followers start to feel disheartened, try to stay positive. This does not mean viewing things through rose-colored glasses. It simply means maintaining a sense of optimism and hope in the face of challenges.

7 Encourage People to Make Contributions

Let the members of your team know that you welcome their ideas. Leaders who encourage involvement from group members are often referred to as democratic or participative leaders. While they retain the final say over all decisions, they encourage team members to take an active role in coming up with ideas and plans.

Research has shown that using a democratic leadership style leads to greater commitment, more creative problem-solving and improved productivity.

8 Motivate Your Followers

Transformational leaders also provide inspirational motivation to encourage their followers to get into action. Of course, being inspirational isn't always easy. Fortunately, you don't need motivational speeches to rouse your group members.

Some ideas for leadership inspiration include being genuinely passionate about ideas or goals, helping followers feel included in the process and offering recognition, praise, and rewards for people's accomplishments.

9 Offer Rewards and Recognition

Another important quality of a good leader involves knowing that offering effective recognition and rewards is one of the best ways to help followers feel appreciated and happy. It may also come as no surprise that happy people tend to perform better at work.

According to researchers Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer, leaders can help group members feel happier by offering help, removing barriers to success and rewarding strong efforts.

10 Keep Trying New Things

Who says leadership is a one-way relationship? As you work toward developing some of these leadership qualities, don't forget to look to your followers for feedback and inspiration.

Pay attention to the things that have been effective in the past and always be on the lookout for new ways to inspire, motivate and reward group members.

Transformational Leadership

Have you ever been in a group where someone took control of the situation by conveying a clear vision of the group's goals, a marked passion for the work, and an ability to make the rest of the group feel recharged and energized? This person just might be what is called a transformational leader.

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that can inspire positive changes in those who follow. Transformational leaders are generally energetic, enthusiastic, and passionate. Not only are these leaders concerned and involved in the process; they are also focused on helping every member of the group succeed as well.

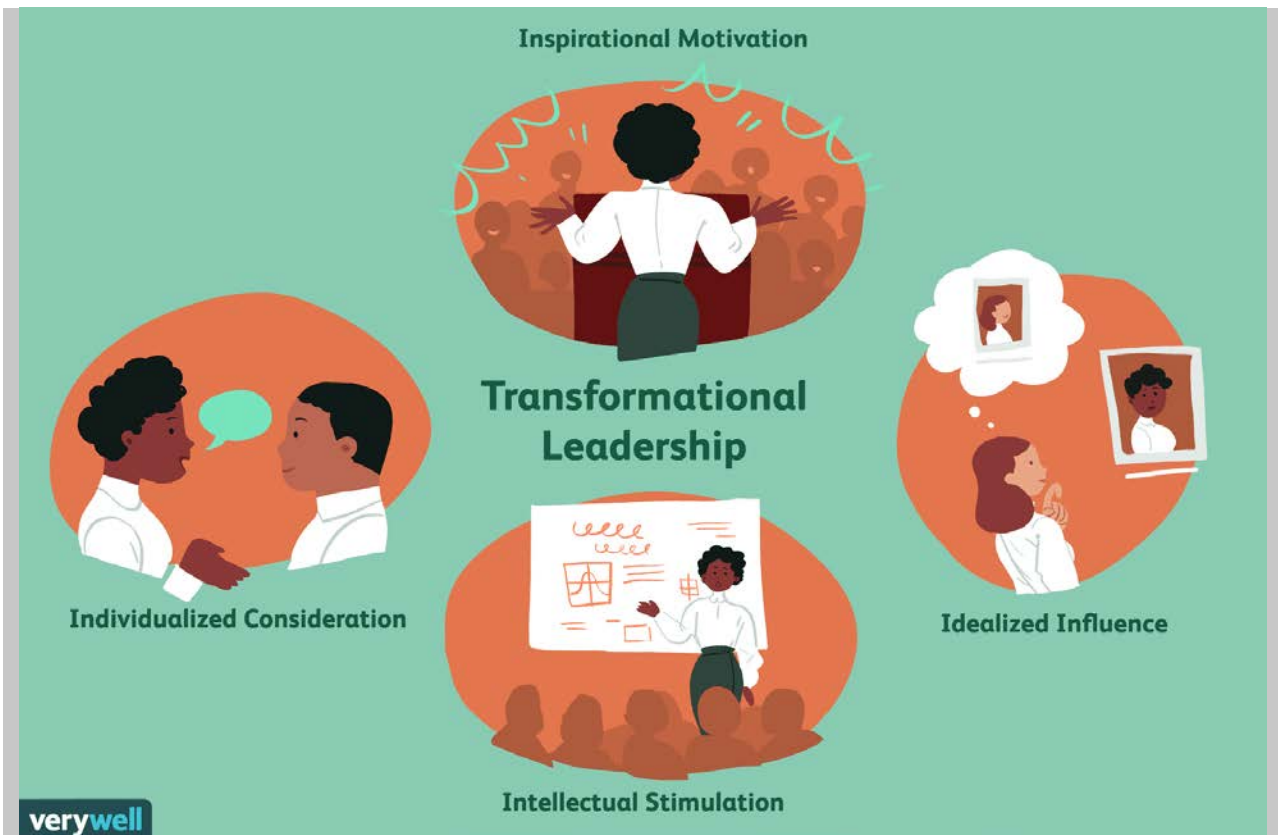


Illustration by Emily Roberts, Verywell

Transformational leadership can be seen when leaders and followers make each other to advance to a higher level of moral and motivation. Through the strength of their vision and personality, transformational leaders are able to inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations to work towards common goals. Transformational leaders, garner trust, respect, and admiration from their followers.

Transformational Leadership Components

There are four different components of transformational leadership.

1. **Intellectual Stimulation** – Transformational leaders not only challenge the status quo; they also encourage creativity among followers. The leader encourages followers to explore new ways of doing things and new opportunities to learn.
2. **Individualized Consideration** – Transformational leadership also involves offering support and encouragement to individual followers. In order to foster supportive relationships, transformational leaders keep lines of communication open so that followers feel free to share ideas and so that leaders can offer direct recognition of the unique contributions of each follower.
3. **Inspirational Motivation** – Transformational leaders have a clear vision that they are able to articulate to followers. These leaders are also able to help followers experience the same passion and motivation to fulfill these goals.
4. **Idealized Influence** – The transformational leader serve as a role model for followers. Because followers trust and respect the leader, they emulate this individual and internalize his or her ideals.

So what are some typical signs of a transformational leader? Groups led by this type of leader tend to be both successful and loyal. They give a lot to the team and care deeply about the group's ability to accomplish its goals. Turnover tends to be quite low as transformational leaders are able to inspire a great deal of commitment in their followers.

Effects

In their classic text, *Transformational Leadership*, authors Bass and Riggio explained:

"Transformational leaders...are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization."

Researchers have found that this style of leadership can have a positive effect on the group.

"Research evidence clearly shows that groups led by transformational leaders have higher levels of performance and satisfaction than groups led by other types of leaders," explained psychologist and leadership expert Ronald E. Riggio in an article for *Psychology Today*.

The reason, he suggests, is that transformational leaders believe that their followers can do their best, leading members of the group to feel inspired and empowered.

What can you do to become a more transformational leader? Leadership experts suggest that having a strong, positive vision of the future plays a critical role. Not only is it important to believe in this vision yourself; you've also got to inspire others to buy into your vision as well. Being genuine, passionate, supportive, and trustworthy are all key characteristics that will help motivate followers to support your goals for the group.

A Democratic Leadership Style Is Usually Most Effective

Democratic leadership, also known as participative leadership or shared leadership, is a type of leadership style in which members of the group take a more participative role in the decision-making process. This type of leadership can apply to any organization, from private businesses to schools to government.

Everyone is given the opportunity to participate, ideas are exchanged freely, and discussion is encouraged. While the democratic process tends to focus on group equality and the free flow of ideas, the leader of the group is still there to offer guidance and control. The democratic leader is charged with deciding who is in the group and who gets to contribute to the decisions that are made.

Researchers have found that the democratic leadership style is one of the most effective types and leads to higher productivity, better contributions from group members, and increased group morale.

Characteristics of Democratic Leadership

Some of the primary characteristics of democratic leadership include:

- Group members are encouraged to share ideas and opinions, even though the leader retains the final say over decisions.
- Members of the group feel more engaged in the process.
- Creativity is encouraged and rewarded.

Researchers suggest that good democratic leaders possess specific traits that include:

- Honesty
- Intelligence
- Courage
- Creativity
- Competence
- Fairness

Strong democratic leaders inspire trust and respect among followers. They are sincere and base their decisions on their morals and values. Followers tend to feel inspired to take action and contribute to the group. Good leaders also tend to seek diverse opinions and do not try to silence dissenting voices or those that offer a less popular point of view.

Benefits

- More ideas and creative solutions
- Group member commitment
- High productivity

Drawbacks

- Communication failures
- Poor decision-making by unskilled groups
- Minority or individual opinions overridden

Benefits of Democratic Leadership

Because group members are encouraged to share their thoughts, democratic leadership can lead to better ideas and more creative solutions to problems. Group members also feel more involved and committed to projects, making them more likely to care about the end results. Research on leadership styles has also shown that democratic leadership leads to higher productivity among group members.

Drawbacks of Democratic Leadership

While democratic leadership has been described as the most effective leadership style, it does have some potential downsides. In situations where roles are unclear or time is of the essence, democratic leadership can lead to communication failures and uncompleted projects. In some cases, group members may not have the necessary knowledge or expertise to make quality contributions to the decision-making process. Democratic leadership can also lead to team members feeling like their opinions and ideas aren't taken into account, which may lower employee satisfaction and morale.

Best Setting to Use Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership works best in situations where group members are skilled and eager to share their knowledge. It is also important to have plenty of time to allow people to contribute, develop a plan, and then vote on the best course of action.