

12 Secrets of Visionary Leaders

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Leadership is the highest spiritual calling. As leaders, we start with ourselves; it's managing our whole self—mind, body, and eco-spirit, by utilizing the spirit that lies within.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "A good leader inspires people to have confidence in the leader, a great leader inspires people to have confidence in themselves." Of course, becoming a great visionary leader isn't easy. Successfully maneuvering the community to raise consciousness is a

Leadership is an area that tends to get overlooked, according to leadership coach John C. Maxwell, author of the 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership and Developing the Leader within You (Nelson, 1998 and 2000). While visionary leaders demonstrate numerous attributes, allow me to highlight the seven Cs:

Confidence, competence, courage, compassion, creativity, curiosity, and commitment.

It turns out, the skills and talents necessary to guide your community to raise its consciousness are possible to develop, and we can all do so with mindfulness, determination, patience, and commitment. Visionary leaders take courageous paths that others may fear to embark upon. Visionary leadership is not just about meeting a goal: It's about making a difference. To serve as effective visionary leaders, we must understand the context for our leadership roles.

The following is a list of 12 tips drawn from the secrets of successful visionary leaders.

1. Gather a circle of dedicated individuals. Your team needs to be committed to you and the business of healing the globe. Successful entrepreneurs have not only social and selling smarts, but also the know-how to hire effectively, says leadership trainer Harvey Mackay, who wrote *Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive* (Ivy Books, 1995). You must be able to identify, attract, and retain visionary people who are mindful and have similar values, who are working on their self.

When putting your team together, look for people whose values are aligned with your mission and vision. Suzanne Bates, a leadership consultant and author of *Speak Like a CEO* (McGraw Hill, 2005), says her team members rallied around one another during the worst part of the recession because they all believed in what they were doing. "Having people on your team who have tenacity and a candid spirit is really important," she says.

2. Communicate effectively with team members and other like-minded leaders. Open and transparent communication is very important. At ATOP Meaningfulworld, we send one another our weekly SMART goals on Thursdays before the following week. This is an example of connecting individuals with one another, with the leadership, and with the vision. In addition, a visionary leader needs to partner with other like-minded leaders, as in United Nations Sustainable Development Goals #17: "Develop a global partnership for development."
3. Don't take things personally. Take time to reinforce your vision, mission, goals, and actions to your team members. When in a state of chaos, stay focused on the vision, and don't take negative attitudes of others personally (*The Four Agreements*, Don Miguel Ruiz, 1997). Remember the words of philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer: "All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. And third, the truth is accepted as being self-evident" (*The World As Will and Representation*, 1818). By exercising detachment and practicing forgiveness, visionary leaders can keep their eyes (focused) on the vision, discover lessons, and establish new meanings (*Forgiveness & Reconciliation*, Kalayjian & Paloutzian, 2010). My Haitian spiritual healer once said, "People throw stones only to abundant trees full of fruits," so when people are envious or throw you challenges, be grateful, know that you are abundant and on the right track.

4. Be authentic and mindful. Visionary leaders instill their visions, dreams, and passion into the fabric of their organization, says behavioral expert Beverly Flaxington. If you are mindful and authentic (impeccable with your words, Ruiz, 1997), and you surround yourself with people who are aligned with your values, you will be more likely to succeed beyond your goals.
5. Know your obstacles. Most visionary leaders are optimistic and certain they are driving toward their goals. However, Flaxington says a leader who doesn't take the time to understand own obstacles is shortsighted. Welcome obstacles as lessons learned. The best solution is to be proactive and engage in full alignment: head, heart, and hand (Kalayjian, 2011).
6. Create a "team charter." Too many new teams race down the road before they even figure out who they are, where they're going, and what will guide their journey, says Ken Blanchard, coauthor of *The One-Minute Manager* (William Morrow & Company, 1982). Just calling together a team and giving them a clear charge does not mean the team will succeed. In the charter, or the manual we provide common agreements and can be modified as the team grows, and new members are integrated.
7. Believe in your team and empower them. Visionary leaders must help their people develop confidence, especially during crises situations. As Napoleon Bonaparte said, "Leaders are dealers in hope." That confidence comes in part from believing in your team. We have had volunteers who could not behave assertively and speak with authority, and at the end of our humanitarian missions they were speaking with ambassadors, and presidents of organizations with ease and comfort.
8. Give positive reinforcements and constructive criticisms. Giving acknowledgments, validation, and positive reinforcements can motivate people, especially during challenging times.
9. Keep your team engaged. Great leaders give their team challenges, deadlines, and get them excited about those challenges, says leadership expert Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Free Press, 1989). Differentiate between short and long term goals and as Martin Luther King said "Keep your eyes on the prize."
10. Practice calmness and meditation for inner peace. A visionary leader must prevent the team from overreacting to short-term situations, says Mackay. This is particularly important now, when the economically and morally depressed environment is spreading like an infectious pandemic.
11. Prioritize and perceive. Know what is important and communicate it to your team and beyond. Be perceptive. Be proactive rather than reactive. Be still to receive guidance from unseen sources. Help your fellow human beings be, instead of focusing on doing and having. Caring for self is an important first step.
12. Be a positive role model to navigate chaos peacefully. Crises can create danger as well as opportunity. Danger is present when one repeats the mistakes of the past, and opportunity presents itself when we learn the positive lessons from our mistakes. We can activate a network of grace, calm, and deliberate connection for collective change. Visionary leaders must envision, meditate, send prayers, and be vigilant through print media and social networking.

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