

12 Leadership Qualities to Look for When Hiring a Manager



Managers have the power to make or break their organizations. While great leaders encourage their employees to reach their full potential and help their organizations surpass their goals, terrible dictators discourage workers to the point they want to jump ship.

And many of them do. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, nearly half of employees who leave jobs do so to get away from their bosses.

Since you don't want to lose your best employees, it's critical that you do everything you can to ensure you fill managerial positions with the right people the first time around.

Great managers are able to lead teams, help them grow, and maintain full control over their business and its performance at the same time. These are the people who manage to constantly adapt to new situations, encourage others to reach their full potential, and deliver their best work, too.

Simply put, great leaders don't just lead by example. They keep their top goals in mind at all times, making sure they and their team never go astray from these targets. They also execute and are self-serving, putting their best effort into conducting their own tasks. Above all else, they are focused on developing their own leadership skills.

"The single biggest way to impact an organization is to focus on leadership development. There is almost no limit to the potential of an organization that recruits good people, raises them up as leaders and continually develops them." —[John Maxwell](#)

As you go about your search for a new manager, keep in mind that great ones usually possess these 12 leadership qualities.

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What makes a good manager great?

Any good manager who's serious about their leadership development has a series of common skills and traits that can define whether or not they will succeed and become a true leader instead of being just another boss. Here are 12 of those skills.

1. Honesty

The moment a team stops believing their leader is telling the truth, things start to fall apart. Why should workers follow their bosses with any level of confidence if they've come to find out the individual has been less than honest?

In one of our past studies, we found out that as many as 61% of workers believe that trusting their managers is of top importance for employee job satisfaction. Unfortunately, only 33% of these people are actually happy with the level of trust within their company.

In the business world, honesty is critically important. When hiring a manager, look for candidates who understand the importance of openness and transparency. Leading by example, honest managers inspire the rest of their teams to be similarly truthful.



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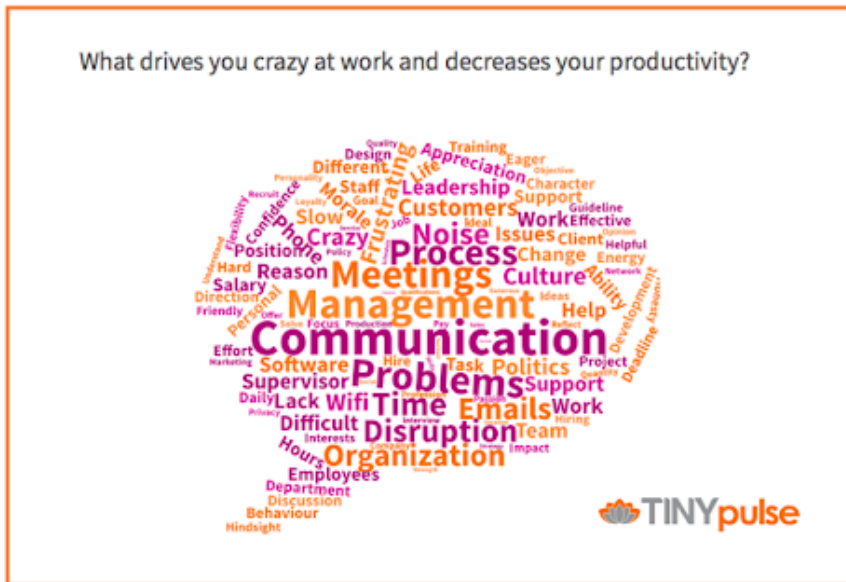
2. Communication skills

Our [employee engagement research](#) revealed that poor communication from management is one of the biggest pain points when it comes to decreasing productivity.

It's one thing for managers to know what needs to be done. It's a whole different thing for them to be able to clearly communicate those priorities to each member of their team—all of whom are responsible for different tasks.

Excellent communication skills are yet another one of the characteristics of great leaders. The best managers are able to get their team on the same page so that everyone works toward the same objective—not seven different interpretations of that objective.

Managers need to be able to communicate verbally. But the best ones are also able to communicate via the written word just as effectively.



3. Decisiveness

Whether they work for themselves or manage enormous departments, in addition to routine decisions, all managers have to make tough choices regularly.

To make your business more efficient, look for candidates who understand that the buck stops at their desk and aren't afraid to act swiftly when they need to. Strong leaders are able to make difficult decisions quickly, after doing their due diligence and assessing all of their options.

The average person makes as many as [35,000 different](#) decisions each day. Managers probably make at least a few more since a large part of the decision-making process at work falls on their shoulders. Select an indecisive manager, and your company moves more slowly—it's that simple.

In fact, this is one of the best leadership skills everyone should have, or, as [Brian Tracy](#) puts it: "Decisiveness is a characteristic of high-performing men and women. Almost any decision is better than no decision at all."

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4. Confidence

To retain the support of their teams, managers need to be confident that the decisions they're making are the right ones. After a tough decision is made, managers need to be able to convince their teams to move forward—even the employees who would've made a different choice if they were in charge. Candidates who project confidence are much more likely to inspire all of their workers—including the ones who disagree with them.

From time to time, all businesses suffer setbacks. A court might rule against you. A new competitor might enter the market and gain traction. A new product release might not be well-received by your customers. In any such situation, managers need to remain confident so they can lead their teams forward.

Having solid self-esteem is not innate though. Great leaders and CEOs such as Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, and Mark Zuckerberg had to gradually develop this skill of theirs. [Susan Cain](#) described Gates as being at times “quiet and bookish” until he shows his outspoken side.



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5. Responsibility

Great managers understand that they're the ones in charge, meaning they're responsible for everyone's performance—the successes and the failures. To this end, they keep tabs on all of their employees to see what they can do to help them become better workers and develop professionally.

According to our [2019 Employee Engagement Report](#), more than half of the employees said their promotion and career path were not clear to them. That figure leaves a lot to be desired because many workers place a high value on professional development.

Managers who are invested in their employees and committed to helping them grow professionally will almost assuredly keep their staff engaged.



6. Empathy

Back to that stat about people quitting their bosses: If employees are drowning in work—and [70% of them](#) feel like they are, according to our research—managers need to be understanding. They need to be able to put themselves into their staff's shoes and imagine what it's like to do their jobs.

Look for managerial candidates who understand the importance of empathy. When managers don't listen to their employees and understand where they are coming from, bad things like [workers leaving your company](#) or losing your trust can happen.

In fact, a whopping [91% of CEOs](#) can see the link between this often overlooked trait and their organization's financial performance.

7. Focus

Any given company has an enormous amount of competing priorities. Many initiatives move forward simultaneously, and there's a lot to keep up with.

For businesses to succeed, managers can't lose sight of something because they're too busy dealing with something else.

This focus that's often so hard to achieve comes along with several other benefits like helping you:

Increase your creativity

Keep your client in mind at all times

Stand out from competitors

Achieve your goals—personal and business ones alike

Build stronger networks and partnerships

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This [Harvard Business Review study](#) found that the efficiency of leaders isn't rooted in lots of hours of work. Instead, it's based on how well they're able to stay focused on their tasks and goals.

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It goes without saying managers need to be aware of the big picture. But they also need to have a laser-like focus on the smaller things, too.

Look for candidates who've demonstrated they're able to wear many hats at once. Great managers have a track record of successfully seeing multiple projects through from conception to completion.



8. Creativity

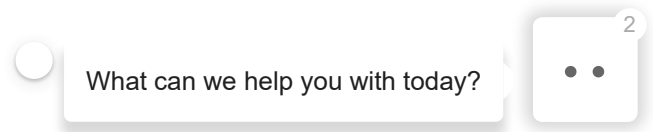
Want to take your company to the next level? Hire a manager who has a knack for thinking outside the box and coming up with amazing ideas.

Decisions aren't always so black and white. Sometimes, creative solutions are required to solve problems.

As you search for managerial candidates, look for applicants who have demonstrated their ability to come up with creative solutions to complex problems. This is one of the essential qualities of all great managers. They are known for thinking about new ways to improve operations and serve customers better while also making their employees happier.

If you consider candidates who have spearheaded projects, helped conceive new products or services and figured out ways to improve productivity, you're likely to wind up with a great manager.

"Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while." —[Steve Jobs](#)





9. Optimism

Economic-related optimism among CEOs keeps falling with every quarter. From a wide perspective, this sentiment is a general outlook on the business world. There's also the tiny bits of positivity managers can display on a day-to-day basis in everything they do.

Everyone can struggle at work from time to time. And in some cases, a majority of workers can struggle concurrently. Just think of a company overhauling its tech infrastructure and all the resulting headaches.

It's easy to get frustrated at work. When managers openly express their disgust about something when everyone else is struggling, it can bring the team down even more. Great managers understand this, which is why they try their best to remain optimistic and positive at all times.

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10. Commitment

Managers who view their roles solely as stepping stones to other, more lucrative opportunities can significantly impact their team's morale when they take another gig in 18 months.

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Great leaders tend to stick around. They're in it for the long haul.

They commit to their teams, goals, stakeholders, culture, and the economy in general. Maybe they have their sights set on climbing the ladder. But they're not looking to land the next job they can find. They're dedicated to one cause and are looking to get promoted and move up the ranks. Most importantly, they set themselves up for success and become a model to those following them.

"People do not follow uncommitted leaders. Commitment can be displayed in a full range of matters to include the work hours you choose to maintain, how you work to improve your abilities, or what you do for your fellow workers at personal sacrifice." —[Stephen Gregg](#), Chairman and CEO of Ethis Corp



11. Delegation

Beyond being a simple leadership quality, delegation is a power in its entirety. It's the power to get rid of less pressing work to get more time to focus on important tasks that require a manager's full attention.

Many leaders are hesitant to delegate work because they think that it's going to be detrimental to their image, making them appear as weak, indifferent, or unskilled—all of which are false claims.

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Delegating is not simply a process in which you toss your work to someone else because you're not willing to do it. It's about knowing that there are people who are better prepared to do one task than you, appreciating this reality, and freeing up your calendar so you can bring your attention to those duties where your own skills can shine.

Here are some of the best tasks and processes you can delegate to the right person:

Administrative tasks, from finances to HR

Training and onboarding duties

Feedback collection

Project and time management

Recurring decision-making tasks

Priorities approaching their due date when you're not prepared to handle them in time

All activities where someone else on your team has more knowledge and expertise to take care of them

A task you know will motivate an employee and prepare them for a higher responsibility

Any of your tasks that other people with similar skills to yours will enjoy doing

14 Employee Survey Questions to Evaluate Management Effectiveness

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12. Vision

What would the world be without vision? Everything we see around us is there because somebody once had a crazy idea they wanted to bring to life.

Leaders begin their journey with a vision. Depending on how high they aim, their vision might include helping all of humankind advance. No, these are not just big empty words. This is truly what having a good vision can do.

A strong leader's ultimate goal is to take their own vision, share it with others, and help the whole team achieve the impossible.

When hiring a manager, you'll probably want them to follow your own company's vision. Here's where alignment between the candidate and your own brand becomes critically important. The right candidate will share your vision. So why not return the favor and help them take their own ideas out of the closet and bring them to life?

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Does a management candidate need to have all of these leadership qualities?

It may be hard to find someone who has all 12 of these leadership characteristics. But they do exist.

Otherwise, you can hire the candidate who has a majority of the qualities that your business needs the most and help them develop the traits they lack.

This is a time-consuming process. But certain traits—such as optimism or empathy—can certainly be developed in time.

So, write down your ideal candidate's must-have leadership skills in order of their importance. Have each candidate speak to instances in their careers where they had to use these qualities (providing proof, of course).

A management candidate who's made use of multiple leadership attributes several times throughout their career is highly likely to also display the same traits when interacting with your team. After all, you're looking for a true leader—not just someone to give out tasks and orders.

"The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority." —[Kenneth Blanchard](#)



Andrew Sumitani

April 30, 2020



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