



## Leaders and Leadership

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We have leaders throughout society, in groups, organisations, business, political parties, whole countries and more. Recognised experts are often referred to as 'world leaders' in their field. We talk of 'good leaders' and 'bad leaders.' What is a leader, and what is the art of leadership about?

### What is a Leader?

A leader is someone who leads. To lead is to be the front person in a group of others. Being a leader implies that you have followers. The followers 'come after' or behind you. Leading others implies that they either copy you or do what you tell them. There is the expectation that you 'know more' than they do or are more experienced. You are guiding and influencing others in one or more ways. Being a leader entails responsibility. You are directing and have power over others. You bear some responsibility for what they do, how it affects them and others impacted by their actions. Being a leader has an ethical dimension. The wellbeing of your followers directly relates to how you lead.

### What is Leadership?

Leadership is the practice of leading. Max DePree refers to it as an 'art.'<sup>1</sup> Many theories about leadership have emerged, with various statements about what good leadership entails and what makes a good leader. Businesses and organisations have become aware that the quality of their leaders and the type of leadership they use has a major impact on their success and the bottom line. Leaders in business set directions, as opposed to managers, who carry those directions out.

### Leadership Styles

**Autocratic Leadership** is leading from top-down. There is little or no consultation with the team.

**Democratic Leadership** entails consultation where possible, but the leader makes the final decision.

**Laissez-faire Leadership** implies little involvement. Teams are often left to their own devices. This may work if the team is directed and capable, but not if it is ineffective or poorly motivated.

**Servant Leadership** is the style of setting a good example, rather than overtly directing team members. The leader is a good role-model, with integrity and genuine care for the needs of the team.

**Transactional Leadership** is when the focus is on tasks and performance. The leader's relationship with team members centres on how well they complete their tasks, for which there may be rewards, punishments or bonuses. Important is that team members know what is expected of them.

**Transformational Leadership** exemplifies the idea of leadership as a catalyst for moving forward into better things and a brighter future. Transformational leaders set visions and inspire and motivate their team to 'get on board' and work hard so that all reap benefits from their endeavours.

### Qualities of Leadership

There are many views on the qualities of leadership. What qualities does a person need to have to be a good leader? Some common qualities proposed are: commitment, creativity, dedication, initiative, integrity, loyalty, motivation, and ownership. Good leaders are hard-working, imaginative and resilient. They have the interests of their team and their organisation at heart. The best leaders go that extra mile. They can see farther than most of us. They are visionary. The best leaders inspire us and take us to a better place. They show us that we can be more than we already are.

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<sup>1</sup> See Max Dupree, 'Leadership is an Art' 1989, Australian Business Library, Melbourne. For a comprehensive coverage of leadership, see some of the copious recent publications on the topic.