

7 Ways Modest Leadership Increases Team Success

People who listen are heard. Braggarts mostly end up talking to themselves.



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When we imagine the traits of successful leaders, whether they are managers, high level executives, CEO's or owners of successful companies we typically view them to be strong, charismatic, enthusiastic and visionary. The one important trait often overlooked in great leaders is modesty.

To be great, leaders need more depth than a loud mouth, the power of persuasion, and over the top self-confidence. This type of leadership is top-down, wedging a great divide between leaders and their team members or colleagues. Leaders who possess an air of modesty have shown to produce higher quality work and to drive higher quality performance in the following ways.

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1. Inclusive

Modest leaders have no need or desire to be better, separate or above those they lead. They take an egalitarian approach to their leadership. They welcome and are open to hearing the thoughts, ideas and opinions of others. Rather than seeking others to approve of them, they are more interested in seeing how others can help them improve the overall culture of success. These types of leaders are effective because they place such a high value and making decisions which are in the best interest of their team. They are clear that no one person has all the answers, especially themselves. People work harder for leaders who value what they have to contribute rather than having their opinions ignored and/or dismissed. Modest leaders are comfortable asking for input but can be equally as decisive when the situation calls for it.

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2. Other centered

When leaders are genuinely concerned for the well-being of their team members, it makes sense that team members would show higher quality performance. Their leader is viewed as *among* them, as "on their team." This doesn't indicate the leader has to babysit or micromanage their every move; rather, the work environment, as a whole, is based in caring and teamwork. No one is left alone to struggle. Unassuming leaders used positive acknowledgement as a motivating force, as they know people cannot be demeaned or beat-up into producing quality work. It has been shown time and again, that productivity is much higher when team members believe their leader is consistently looking out for them.

3. Accountability

One of the key makers of modesty is the ability to admit wrong. It is difficult for team members to be transparent and open when leaders make themselves emotionally unavailable, immune to being wrong or to making critical mistakes. This creates an oppressive, causing team members to work in fear and to hide mistakes whenever possible.

As human beings, we all make mistakes. When our leader is self-effacing and open about their own missteps, how they deal with and recover from them, team members learn to trust their leader more deeply and to see him/her as more understanding and approachable. This inspires team members to openly seek guidance and receive feedback when needed. People don't typically feel compelled to follow a leader who has never suffered. The greatest compliment to a great leader, is the trust of their team members.

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4. Composure

Modesty brings composure. Effective leaders are able to accept ambiguity instead of struggling for the need to control. They accept that not everything can be perfectly anticipated or predicted. When humility is present, leaders show the composure to wait and see how uncertain factors fall into place before making decisions. Many leaders want to control everything. Reality is, there are simply some things that absolutely cannot be known upfront. The composure to wait takes self-control, and helps leaders to more accurately know when to step in and take charge, and when to give things a bit more time to marinate. These types of leaders are great models for letting things go instead of trying to force things in place. There is great value in being able to admit that the best answer or course of direction isn't always available until more information becomes available. This skill is exactly what they want to teach and see emulated in those they lead.

5. Personal growth

Modesty is best developed through investing in our own personal growth, as modesty doesn't come easy to everyone. The large majority of effective leaders engage in daily journaling and reading to keep themselves focused and well managed. They examine where they're succeeding, and the areas in which they need improvement. By documenting what they do well in their interactions and how they could have communicated better enhances their perspective on where they are in need of some improvement. They encourage their team members to also actively engage in their own self-reflection, so as to increase their capacity to succeed.

6. Value independence

Overcontrolling leadership kills morale, longing and high-quality performance. Humble leaders take a vested interest in hiring good people, in training them and then getting out of their way so as to allow the people they've hired the freedom and independence to do their job. Modest leaders are able to admit that their way is not the only way and that some of the people they hire are more effective than themselves in certain roles or with certain responsibilities. In being able to accept these truths it allows team members to offer the best parts of themselves to the whole, creating an environment of comradery and team cohesion. When people are given the freedom to utilize the best of their skills to any job, and they feel valued for their part, teams succeed.

7. Optimistic

Optimism is the driving force that supports team members to be as successful as they have the potential to be. Modest leaders demonstrate the depth of their own self-awareness along with the awareness they have of each individual team member. They use this knowledge and insight to treat each team member according to their unique needs.

Optimism makes team members want to perform up to standard or above. The better they perform, the more positivity they contribute to the overall work environment. When the leadership is pessimistic, the trickle effect is that the negativity infects each and every team member, taking morale down and increasing tensions and conflict. It takes steadfast modesty to stay positive, even when things aren't perfect.