

How to Lead and build your Reputation

*"If you don't connect, you have no influence, and if you have no influence, you can't lead."*¹ Brand Pretorius

Study my best 21 leadership characteristics below and ask yourself how many are used by conmen? Then ask yourself how many of them are used by great leaders? Most of them are used by both, but the difference is that conmen use them disingenuously to manipulate, whereas great leaders use them authentically and with benevolent intent to influence and inspire.

These 21-Ways to build a leader's reputation should be done intentionally. Neglect them and you will have created a detrimental effect on your team members. Use them disingenuously and, sooner than later, you run the risk of being found out.

21 Ways to Build a Leader's Reputation

1. **Complete Trust:** Influential and inspirational leaders take full responsibility for leading. They're 100% committed. They respect their followers' personal values and incorporate them into the future of the organization. In the challenge of change, great leaders are agents that exude a positive and enthusiastic attitude. They trust and are trusted by their followers. There is transparency. They share their knowledge. Inspirational leaders lead and influence by personal example, and thus instill confidence for their team to follow. They start the forward momentum by personally executing some of the strategic plan. They are naturally attractive because they look, sound, and act like leaders. They're authentic. From their dress code to their behavior, they're consistent. They look you in the eye and listen. They are competent team builders, understand technology, coach well, manage their own lives competently, have a great global perspective, and think strategically. Change programs are executed with excitement because the leaders "sell" and support the program well. With these characteristics, their advice and coaching is trusted.

Disingenuous leaders, with little character but lots of personality, create a thin veneer of "trust".

"The greatest motivational act one person can do for another is to listen." Roy E. Moody

2. **Emotional bond:** Transparent and open about their feelings, great leaders establish a sincere emotional connection, giving more meaning to the workplace. They establish a sense of community. Emphasizing that a leader's *relational* position is crucial, the great Dr. John Maxwell says, "I would vow to love people before trying to lead them." Under this organizational climate of co-creation, people work best as they co-act to create a meaningful vision. Thus the leader does not only leverage off her *legitimate* job title and *expertise/experience* 'power' but also has *referent/friendship* power, making them attractive to work with. Great leaders rarely use *coercive* "control & command" power. Leaders pledge their full support to their team and hold no prejudices. Charismatic leaders deliberately invest time, daily, to get to know their team members, and thus earn their respect.

"Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Stephen R Covey

They frequently have 1:1 meetings. Great leaders spot talent and nurture it. Leaders encourage

<p>their members and create an atmosphere that it's okay to take risks and fail. They see conflict as an opportunity to learn. Work and fun are both taken seriously. Members want to perform because they realise that the intention of their leader is unselfish benevolence. An old Chinese proverb goes, "He who is not loyal to others will not find others loyal to him."</p>
<p>3. Leaders serve: Leaders don't rely on their positional power but see leadership as a privilege. They support their people. They remain humble and open to criticism. They invite feedback. There's congruence between their personal values and the values of their followers. Their passion to lead is so strong, that their long-suffering is easily endured. See in this light, they are happy to serve and sacrifice themselves for their people. Zig Ziglar has said, "You can have everything in life that you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want."</p>
<p>4. Self-esteem enough to relinquish power: Great leaders like themselves and transfer this energy. Leaders are secure enough to relinquish some of their authority and groom their successors well in advance. They love empowering their team. They're compassionate. When leaders delegate tasks, the followers are not just given responsibility, but along with this accountability they are empowered by being given the necessary authority and independence as well. With high self-esteem, they bounce back from failure fast.</p>
<p>5. Energetic and optimistic: Leaders use the Law of Similar Responses so that their optimistic psyche rubs off onto their team members' mirror neuron system. Happy and confident leaders create happy and confident companies. Energised leaders energise their team. Inspired leaders inspire. Barack Obama, without proven technical skills to lead the USA, inspired the nation by relying heavily on his "Yes We Can" campaign. He sold the placebo-of-hope and was elected president.</p>
<p>6. Liked and respected leader: Because of their expertise and wisdom, the leader has a legitimate right to lead and manage followers. The leader is respected, making conflict mediation easy. Although they know that being liked is not as important as being respected, being liked is a bonus.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"After the game, the king and the pawn go into the same box." Italian Proverb</p>
<p>7. Career path: Leaders have a vision and career path that is exciting, and wish the same could be true for others. The leader is trusted <i>as they</i> share their short, medium and long-term vision, values, and clearly defined goals. Insecure leaders, scared of failure, don't share their goals.</p>
<p>8. Skills: Top leaders and managers have an excellent track record. They have abundant knowledge and experience – wisdom. They keep reading and learning, which enables them to challenge the status quo. Because they make sense when they speak, their team listens. Their experience gives them an intuition, which their team senses.</p>
<p>9. Members work <i>with</i> leaders, not for them: Leaders know that strategy is written bottom-up or in consultation with members; thus there is a common purpose, shared values, and common goals. There is consensus that the strategy is in fact needed, relevant and realistic. Therefore, objectives evoke an emotional response in everyone responsible for achieving the vision, mission, goals and values.</p>
<p>10. Clearly defined goals and feedback: Leaders acknowledge that team members are not freewheeling individuals but have a clear, challenging and compelling direction (Hertzberg's Theory). Leaders make certain that people know what their responsibility is, what their to-do list is, how to achieve it, and who is in their team. Followers take pride in their organisation's vision, mission and values. They receive regular feedback and have a clear daily line-of-sight of where the finish line is. "If I do this today, I can see the finish line draw closer." Great leaders</p>

are always keen to publicly praise members, but as far as possible will only reprimand in private.
11. Win-win intent: Leaders know that teamwork and a cooperative win-win mindset is part of the corporate culture. There is a sense that everyone cares for each other.
12. Supportive: Leaders are Polite, Alert and Relevant (PAR). Nelson Mandela highlights that sometimes, like herding cattle, we need to lead our people from the “back” – and let others believe they are in front (supportive ‘selling’ style). ² In other more ‘autocratic’ leadership situations, of course, Mandela recommends that leading from the front is more relevant (directive ‘telling’ style). “Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.” George S. Patton, USA Officer, World War II
13. Equality, transparency and flexibility: Humble, yet assertive leaders value open communication and input. Flexibility, freedom of choice, and equality are not just respected, but valued. Ethnic differences are cherished.
14. Daily involvement: Great leaders share and daily engage with members.
15. Congruence: Leaders value congruence. Corporate culture fits employee culture.
16. Great work environment: Leaders make sure that workplace and job design fit team members’ norms. Leaders recognize that induction and regular skills training is empowering.
17. Equitable treatment and hygiene factors: Leaders treat members fairly and offer an equal shot at promotion (Adam’s Equity Theory). Top talent is recognised and remunerated accordingly. Perceived inequalities in compensation create hostility towards the organization, and silos that destroy collaboration. Just the perceived inequality in the location of a colleague’s office (sea view) or parking spot closer to the CEO’s, has sparked many a resignation. Great leaders don’t flash their wealth, but are rather more egalitarian.
18. Consistency in feedback: Leaders <i>consistently</i> give feedback and reward and yet also reprimand when necessary. Members are monitored but never stifled by micromanagement. Achieved milestones are celebrated.
19. Customers enjoy interacting with the organisation: Great leaders make certain that the average customer loves dealing with the company, making work for the average employee rewarding. Respected customers respect frontline staff. When the company shows loyalty first, the loyalty comes back.
20. Tools, systems and processes: Leaders empower members. Systems, processes and tools make the average employee look good.
21. Reputation: We know that just suspicion can wreck a leaders reputation. Secondly, it’s easier to build your reputation than to rebuild your reputation. Leaders thus use their reputation to forge and organisation’s reputation, emphasising the importance of excellent brand equity, a clean track record, and strong share price. “Glass, china and reputations are easily cracked, and never mended well.” Benjamin Franklin

1. *Leadership (SA)*, Nuanced Leadership. Leadership magazine interviewed one of South Africa’s top CEOs,. Edition 303, April 2010, p.36)

2. Time, 21 July 2008, p.26.