



APRIL/MAY 2005 - LEADERSHIP LETTER #3

**Selected excerpts from *Exemplary Leadership*
by Kouzes and Posner**

Friends, Clients, Colleagues ...

I hope you are finding these Leadership Letters useful or interesting.

This **third** letter is simply selected excerpts from the excellent leaders' guide "**Exemplary Leadership**" by Kouzes and Posner. You'd enjoy every page and will want it on your bookshelf. I'm indebted to my colleague Nancy Hanseman (University of Cincinnati Director of OD & Training) for bringing it to my attention.

Happy spring and best wishes!

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If you do not care to receive these Leadership Letters in the future, please simply send us an email to let us know and we'll remove you from the list. Thank you.

This wise and valuable reference for leaders, based on two decades of research in many settings, belongs on every leader's desktop. —Mel Hensey

Selected Excerpts:



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This book has its origins in a study we began in 1983. We wanted to know what people did when they were at their “personal best” in leading others. We assumed that by asking ordinary people to describe extraordinary experiences, we would be able to find and identify patterns of success. And we surely did.

The results of our initial investigation—and of the continuing research we have conducted for two decades—have been striking both in their refutation of many leader stereotypes and in their consistency. Leaders do exhibit certain distinct practices when they are doing their best. And this pattern of behavior varies little from industry to industry, profession to profession, community to community, and country to country.

It is also consistent over time. Leaders everywhere and of every age told us that the fundamentals of leadership are the same today as they were in the 1980's and the 1990's, and they probably have been the same for centuries. Leadership is not a fad. It's a fact.

LEADERSHIP IS A RELATIONSHIP

We firmly believe that—at its core—leadership is not about position or title. It's about caring, about relationships, and about what you **do**.

THE FIVE PRACTICES OF EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP

When getting extraordinary things done, leaders:

- Model the way
- Inspire a shared vision
- Challenge the process
- Enable others to act
- Encourage the heart

Model the Way

“It’s as straightforward,” career services director Andy Ceperley told us, “as never asking anyone else to do something you’re not willing to do yourself.” Leaders **model the way**.

To effectively model the behavior they expect of others, as Andy points out, means that leaders must first be clear about their guiding principles. Since leaders are supposed to stand up for their beliefs, they’d better have some beliefs to stand up for.

Leaders understand the power of spending time with people, of working side by side with colleagues, of telling stories that make the values come alive, of being highly visible during times of uncertainty, and of asking questions to get people to think about aspirations and priorities.

Inspire a Shared Vision

Leaders have a clear image of the future that pulls them forward. Yet visions seen only by leaders are insufficient to create an organized movement or a significant change. A person with no constituents is not a leader, and people will not follow until they accept a vision as their own. Therefore, **leaders must inspire a shared vision**.

To enlist people in a vision, leaders must know their constituents and speak their language. People must believe that leaders understand their needs and have their interests at heart. Leaders forge a unity of purpose by showing constituents how the dream is for the common good. Leaders ignite the flame of passion in others by expressing enthusiasm—communicating their passion.

Challenging the Process

Leaders are pioneers—people who are willing to step out into the unknown. They search for opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve. Every single personal-best leadership case we collected involved some change from the status quo. Not one person claimed to have achieved a personal best by keeping things the same. **All leaders challenge the process**.

But leaders aren’t the only creators or originators of new curricula, programs, services, or processes. In fact, it’s more likely that they’re not: innovation comes more from listening than from telling. The leader’s primary contribution is in the recognition of good ideas, the support of those ideas, and the willingness to challenge the system to get new products, processes, services, and systems adopted.

Enable Others to Act

Leadership is a team effort. Exemplary leaders enable others to act. They foster collaboration and build trust. This sense of teamwork goes far beyond a few direct reports to close confidants. Leaders engage all those who must make the project work.

Leaders make it possible for others to do good work. They know that those who are expected to produce the results must feel a sense of personal power and ownership. Through that relationship, leaders turn their constituents into leaders themselves.

Encourage the Heart

Leaders encourage the heart of their constituents to carry on, to continue even when they might be tempted to give up. Genuine acts of caring—whether exhibited in dramatic gestures or simple actions—uplift the spirits and draw people forward.

It is, after all, part of the leader's job to show appreciation for people's contributions and to create a culture of celebration.

Encouragement is curiously serious business. It's how leaders visibly and behaviorally link rewards with performance. Leaders make sure people see the benefit of behavior that's aligned with cherished values. And leaders also know that celebrations and rituals, when done with authenticity and from the heart, build a strong sense of collective identity and community spirit that can carry a group through tough times.

WHAT PEOPLE LOOK FOR AND ADMIRE IN THEIR LEADERS

Our survey results have been striking in their regularity over the years. Clearly a person must pass several essential tests before others are willing to grant the title **leader**.

What is most striking and most evident is that, consistently over time and across continents, **only four** characteristics have continuously received over 50 percent of votes. Data show what people **most** look for and admire in a leader has been constant. The majority of constituents must believe that the leader is:

- Honest
- Forward-looking
- Competent
- Inspiring

People also expect leaders to be credible ... that is, "they walk their talk."