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1.

1. Define What Leadership Means to You

Built into questions about demonstrating leadership is a hidden subquestion: What does leadership mean to you? So you'll want to make sure you start your answer by making your definition clear.

There's no one way to be a leader, so as long as you've taken some time to think about what leadership means to you personally, you're not going to give a "wrong" answer. Your interviewer doesn't want you to guess what they think a leader is. Instead, it's more important to show that you're self-aware, that you've reflected on what leadership looks like, and that you know it's a journey. "I would want to hear something that is authentic and intentional," Moyer says.

Before your interview, take some time to think about what you think makes a strong leader and what sort of leader you are and want to be, whether or not anyone would be formally reporting to you in this role. Start by thinking about your past experiences both as a leader and an employee and what worked and didn't work for you. For example, maybe you've thrived in work environments with regular, clear communication between teammates and team leaders at each step of a project. Make a list of the qualities, skills,

and actions you value in a leader and use this to define what leadership means to you.

If you're interviewing for a job where you'll be managing people, this definition is especially important. A theory of leadership will help you stand out in the crowd, Moyer says. It shows you understand the power you have over people's jobs in a management role. As the saying goes, "People don't leave jobs, they leave managers," so it's in every company's best interest to make sure their new hires won't send employees out the door. One way to prove you won't drive direct reports to quit is to have a thoughtful, concrete plan for how you'll oversee people's jobs and elevate your team.

2. Choose a Story to Share

Once you know what you think leadership is, it's time to think about times you've put it into practice. You should also ask yourself what leadership situations and skills are likely to come up in the job you're interviewing for to help you pick the most relevant story. For example, does the job description mention taking the lead on certain cross-functional projects? Talk about a successful project (no matter how small!) you led with folks from different teams.

If you feel like you've never been a leader before, don't worry! You probably still have examples of times you demonstrated leadership. Go back to your list of qualities, skills, and actions and think about times when you exemplified them. Reach outside of the workplace if necessary; a situation from a class, school activity, club, or volunteer position will work just fine. For example, maybe you were a key organizer for a fundraiser or started up a new group on your campus or in your neighborhood.

"Women [in particular] tend to downplay their leadership," Moyer says. Be careful not to fall into the trap of underselling your role in something. And remember that you don't need to have had a leadership title to exercise leadership. Maybe you noticed a coworker was struggling with time management at your last workplace and you took the initiative to help them out. Maybe the

person who'd organized an important meeting got sick at the last minute and you stepped in to coordinate day-of logistics and give the presentation.

If you can think of a situation where you demonstrated leadership and achieved tangible or quantifiable results that benefited your team or company, that's all the better. However, even if things didn't quite go as planned, if you learned something from the experience, you shouldn't immediately dismiss using it as an example—as long as it wasn't a total disaster.

2.

1. Decisiveness

Leaders must make difficult decisions — often quickly — and justify their choices to colleagues and employees. Some decisions will be of minor consequence, while many leaders are “born” in periods of great adversity or stress — they rise to the occasion and make the quick decisions that inspire confidence.

2. Critical thinking

Like other leadership skills, your ability to think through complex problems and scenarios can be sharpened through your education. The more you learn, the more you are able to analyze and posit questions, answers, and solutions. Critical thinking enhances your ability to be more decisive and to that end, make better choices for employees and your organization.

3. Motivation

One trait great leaders all have in common is their ability to inspire and influence others, and if you are managing people, you must learn what motivates them.

4. Integrity

Perhaps now more than ever, honesty and ethics matter in the workplace. To be a leader, you must possess a level of integrity that earns you the respect of those working for you and working above you. Among other things, integrity helps you build credibility with those in your orbit, and that is essential to your overall success.

5. Team building

Like motivation, your team building skills will go a long way toward creating unification and harmony in the workplace. As a leader, you will need to be collaborative, and if you already know what it takes to motivate your team, you will have an easier time bringing them together to accomplish projects large and small.

1. Be a Decisive Leader

Align your vision and values with those of the organization. Knowing what's best for your company and your employees will make it easier for you when decision-time arrives.

Come prepared. This complements the previous point. If you have all the facts at your disposal and, notably, understand the consequences of the options at-hand, it will be much easier for you to come to the right decision.

Take initiative. When people are looking around for solutions, it's time to step up. You don't even have to be a manager of people to take initiative and prove to those around you that your choice is the best one for the organization.

Be goal-specific. There is a goal at the end of every decision path, so if you set your goals in advance and stick to them, you're more likely to make the right choice.

2. Enhance Your Critical Thinking Skills

Do your research. If you're going to make a decision or even offer an opinion on a topic, you need to know what you're talking about.

Be an active listener. As a leader, you must maintain an open-door policy with those around you. Employees will come to you with feedback, ideas, and, yes, complaints — all of which you should listen to and factor into your decision-making.

Be curious. Just because people expect leaders to have the answers doesn't mean you're not allowed to ask questions. Be curious about everything in your world, so you can see what's on the horizon, and identify things that can have a positive impact on your organization's future.

3. Be a Motivational Leader

Reward positive outcomes. If those around you can see a payoff at the end of a big project, they are more likely to make a greater effort. You may also consider some form of multi-tiered rewards system that openly celebrates success.

Give feedback. Honest and helpful feedback can be transformative to someone at any age or experience level.

Be transparent about career development. Let those you are leading know that better things are in-store for them, even if it means losing them to a promotion or a competitor.

4. Lead with Integrity

Lead by example. You can set the tone for your organization by showing others what it means to approach your work ethically and with sincerity.

Avoid cultivating negativity. Shutting down the gossip mill and managing conflict responsibly can help you maintain harmony in the workplace. Others around you will recognize your efforts and want to follow in your footsteps.

Be consistent. Predictability can be a good thing when you're making the right choices for employees, departments, or the organization as a whole. Make sure you stay true to the policies you've put in place.

Hold yourself accountable. Mistakes will happen. Leaders will be second-guessed. But if you hold yourself to the same standard — or even a higher standard — than others, you will continue to earn the trust of those around you.

5. Be a Collaborative Leader

Welcome ideas from everyone. When people are involved, they feel like part of the team. You should encourage this behavior, and work to gain input from everyone on the team, no matter where they fall on the organizational chart.

Identify ways to bring people together out of the office. Team building doesn't have to happen at work. You should look for opportunities to foster

the kind of positive, collaborative culture you want by organizing enjoyable out-of-office activities.

Don't forget those you don't see. Today's workplace is face-to-face and virtual, and employees who are in the office will have to collaborate with those working remotely. "Out of sight, out of mind" doesn't apply here, and you will need to apply your collaborative approach to involve everyone.

3.

1. What's your leadership style?

There are many different ways to lead a team toward successfully completing a goal, and a hiring team likely wants to hear about yours. In asking this question, your interviewer is trying to determine whether your style will fit in well at the company or whether it could be disruptive.

Sample answer: My leadership style is flexible because I like to listen to a team, learn about their needs, and adapt my leadership accordingly. I've been on teams where a new leader came in and wanted to change things just for the sake of making an impact. But it never went well. Instead, I prefer actively listening to my team and figuring out what works best for them.

2. What are the most important skills for a leader to have?

Think about highlighting two or three skills that you believe the strongest leaders exhibit. It helps to pair skills that complement one another. For example, perhaps you want to highlight problem-solving and empathy since

those qualities often enhance one another. Whatever you decide, make sure to back up your answer with an explanation.

3. How do you motivate a team?

Teams will face unique challenges as they work together, especially as work grows increasingly hybrid or remote. A hiring team likely wants to know they can trust you to inspire your team and keep things running smoothly without major oversight or interference. Explain how you'd motivate a team by discussing the tools or processes you'd use to build a rapport with them.

4. How do you handle conflict on a team?

Conflict can arise at times, whether from interpersonal clashes or external stressors. This question aims to determine how you handle conflict and the strategies you'd implement to resolve it. Discuss a specific example of conflict resolution from your past work experience, or bring up what you would do when faced with that situation.

Sample answer: I like to begin by encouraging team members to identify a solution together. I want my team to know that I trust them to resolve any problems. But that doesn't always happen. In that case, I try to meet with team members individually before I pull everyone into a group discussion. Again, I don't want to hand out a solution, but if I can create a space where both parties feel heard and understood, I find that they can reach an answer with little oversight.

5. How do you delegate tasks?

It's essential to know how to distribute work among your team, ensuring that each member has the tasks that suit their strengths or help them grow in valuable ways. Hiring teams often want to hear about the thought process you put into delegating tasks, including how you discover each team member's particular talents and stay on top of their progress.

6. How do you encourage employee development?

Many companies invest in their employees by offering professional development in the hopes that they can foster and retain talent. Leaders can provide a good deal of support for this goal by identifying their team's strengths—and weaknesses—so they can recommend courses, conferences, or other opportunities to keep growing.

Sample answer: On my current team, our marketing specialist expressed an interest in learning graphic design since she was increasingly responsible for providing feedback on design-related deliverables. I encouraged her to find and enroll in a part-time course to learn the fundamentals of design, and I've scheduled monthly check-ins so we can discuss what she's learning.

7. How do you deliver feedback?

Feedback ideally helps an employee develop in positive ways. It can come in many modes: in-person during a meeting, in an email, via a communication app like Slack, or as part of a performance review. Think about how you prefer giving feedback, and note how different situations may call for different approaches. For example, a quick check-in about an ongoing task may be fine on Slack, but larger goal setting may need to wait until an employee's annual performance review.

8. How do you respond to feedback?

It's not enough for leaders to provide feedback, they must also be willing to receive it to continue developing professionally. As you craft your response, think about how you appreciate getting feedback, the nature of that feedback (constructive versus negative), and what you need to hear in order to continue growing.

Sample answer: I value feedback because it's a meaningful way to learn what's working—and what isn't. Currently, I have monthly 1:1s with my supervisor, where we talk about our project's successes and areas that may be causing problems. I use it as an opportunity to “check in” about my work so I can keep growing my skill set.

9. Tell me about a time you had a significant impact on a team or project.

There are many ways in which leaders make an impact, including delegating tasks, motivating team members, and resolving conflict. Think about a time when you experienced a particular success as a result of your leadership. It could be completing a project ahead of schedule or under budget, helping a team member grow in a significant way, or proactively recognizing a potential problem and working to avoid it.

10. How do you set priorities as a leader?

Your ability to understand competing demands and decide how to focus your team's attention—or your own—can say a lot about the type of leader you'll be. Hiring teams tend to ask this question to get a sense of your time management and your ability to think critically about a situation.

Sample answer: I always start by looking at a project's goals, so I can figure out the most pressing deadlines and work back from there. I also rely on a number of management tools, like Asana or Aha, to keep my team organized about priorities once they're set.

4.

1. **Physiological needs:** The first of the id-driven lower needs on Maslow's hierarchy are physiological needs. These most basic human survival needs include food and water, sufficient rest, clothing and shelter, overall health, and reproduction. Maslow states that these basic physiological needs must be addressed before humans move on to the next level of fulfillment.

2. **Safety needs:** Next among the lower-level needs is safety. Safety needs include protection from violence and theft, emotional stability and well-being, health security, and financial security.

3. **Love and belonging needs:** The social needs on the third level of Maslow's hierarchy relate to human interaction and are the last of the so-called lower needs. Among these needs are friendships and family bonds—both with biological family (parents, siblings, children) and chosen family (spouses and partners). Physical and emotional intimacy ranging from sexual relationships to intimate emotional bonds are important to achieving a feeling of elevated kinship. Additionally, membership in social groups contributes to meeting this need, from belonging to a team of coworkers to forging an identity in a union, club, or group of hobbyists.

4. **Esteem needs:** The higher needs, beginning with esteem, are ego-driven needs. The primary elements of esteem are self-respect (the belief that you are valuable and deserving of dignity) and self-esteem (confidence in your potential for personal growth and accomplishments). Maslow specifically notes that self-esteem can be broken into two types: esteem which is based on respect and acknowledgment from others, and esteem which is based on

your own self-assessment. Self-confidence and independence stem from this latter type of self-esteem.

5. Self-actualization needs: Self-actualization describes the fulfillment of your full potential as a person. Sometimes called self-fulfillment needs, self-actualization needs occupy the highest spot on Maslow's pyramid. Self-actualization needs include education, skill development—the refining of talents in areas such as music, athletics, design, cooking, and gardening—caring for others, and broader goals like learning a new language, traveling to new places, and winning awards.

5.

1. Share your vision and set clear goals

You can only motivate and inspire your team if they know what they are working towards. Make sure your employees are aware of your vision and what your ultimate goals are for the business.

This encourages everyone to work together to achieve better results. As well as this, regularly set clear and measurable goals that are framed by this vision so that you and your teams can track progress and they are able to see their success in a tangible way.

Supporting alignment within and across teams cultivates increased productivity and can help employees to feel valued and motivated.

2. Communicate with your staff

Part of clear goal-setting relies on effective communication with your team. Communication is a two-way street and you should make sure that there is a constant flow of communication between you and your employees.

This way you can not only keep them up-to-date with what needs to be done but you can also listen to their ideas, opinions, and feedback. This will ultimately have a positive impact on your business as they may approach dilemmas in a different way to you.

Check-in regularly with your team and give them the opportunity to come and talk to you. Make sure you are available to contact and be open and approachable in your attitude to communication. This will make your staff feel involved in the business and its operations which will further motivate them to achieve better results.

3. Encourage teamwork

The best kind of companies are those where everyone works together cohesively. First, make sure your team alignment is on point.

Encouraging and promoting teamwork boosts productivity because it makes employees feel less isolated and helps them to feel more engaged with their tasks. You can do this by regularly holding

team-building activities and opportunities for your team members to bond and get to know one another.

Think about this when hiring new staff by considering how they will add to the team and the company culture. Even if someone is experienced in a role, it doesn't necessarily mean that they will work well with the rest of your employees.

6.

The year 2020 has brought one crisis after another, perhaps exacerbating a common belief that a “heroic leader” can save the day. But does this mythical figure really exist? Leadership, once we study it, isn't one thing exercised at the top by one person, as our colleague and leadership expert Ron Heifetz has observed; it is an activity exerted by people at all levels, and by noticing certain less obvious aspects of leadership, anyone can improve at it.² Leadership is possible any time there is a collective problem. Each of us may have a role to play in mobilizing others to address community problems, and each of us can improve our skills to be more effective. In truth, the ability to exercise leadership effectively requires skills and capacities that must be developed; they are not innate. Leadership is rarely making one decision and sticking to it, or making a grand development happen with a touch. Mostly, leadership is non-heroic and involves painstaking

work, paying attention, and being able to learn quickly and in real time.

Over the last twenty-five years, we have been privileged to lead organizations and public initiatives, consult to global organizations, and teach public policy graduate students and senior executives. This experience enabled us to identify four key elements that seem to improve the odds of leadership success—what we call “four Ps”: perception, process, people, and projection. In our classrooms, often through the use of case studies, we teach leadership stories of successes as well as failures or ambiguous situations where the leader experienced an unexpected outcome. Over time, we have found that advancing organizations or movements relies on activities that include these “four Ps.”

As an example, about fifteen years ago, Tarana Burke led an empowerment workshop for young Black girls in Tuskegee, Alabama. Much of the discussion had been about sexual assault and at the end of the workshop the girls were invited to either write down three things they had learned, or, if they had survived sexual violence they could just write “Me, too.” Not wanting them to feel singled out for revealing their trauma, Burke still hoped to offer them a space to begin healing. At the end of the

Meeting the organizers were flooded with sheets of paper that said “Me, too.” This was a decade before two New York Times journalists published an exposé on the movie producer Harvey Weinstein that most people think kicked off the “Me, too” movement.

Burke is now a national figure, but there was no one moment when she became a leader. Years of

inspiring girls in small community settings to see themselves as valuable and agents of their own future meant she was leading all along. Fear of false accusations against Black men and concerns for family

7.

1. Sincere enthusiasm

True enthusiasm for a business, its products, and its mission cannot be faked. Employees can recognize insincere cheerleading from a mile away. However, when leaders are sincerely enthusiastic and passionate, that's contagious. For instance, someone who worked with Elon Musk on the early stages of his SpaceX project said that the true driver behind the success of the project was Musk's enthusiasm for space travel.

Wang says being enthusiastic helps a leader identify existing key problems in his industry. "Any innovation starts from these problems and ends with products and services, with some of the key issues resolved," he said.

2. Integrity

Whether it's giving proper credit for accomplishments, acknowledging mistakes, or putting safety and quality first, great leaders exhibit integrity at all times. They do what's right, even if that isn't the best thing for the current project or even the bottom line.

“When people see evidence that leaders lack integrity, that can be nearly impossible to recover from,” Wang said. “Trust lost is difficult to get back.”

3. Great communication skills

Leaders must motivate, instruct and discipline the people they are in charge of. They can accomplish none of these things if they aren't very skilled communicators. Not only that, poor communication can lead to poor outcomes. Leaders who fail to develop these skills are often perceived as being weak and mealy-mouthed, according to Wang. It's also important to remember that listening is an integral part of communication.

4. Loyalty

The best leaders understand that true loyalty is reciprocal. Because of this, they express that loyalty in tangible ways that benefit the member of their teams. True loyalty is ensuring that all team members have the training and resources to do their jobs. It's standing up for team members in crisis and conflict.

“Great leaders see themselves as being in a position of service to their team members,” Wang said. “Employees who believe leadership is loyal to them are much more likely to show their own loyalty when it matters.”

5. Decisiveness

A good leader isn't simply empowered to make decisions due to their position. They are willing to take on the risk of decision making. They make these decisions and take risks knowing that if

things don't work out, they'll need to hold themselves accountable first and foremost.

Further, bosses who aren't decisive are often ineffective. Too much effort working on consensus building can have a negative effect. Rather than simply making a decision, many leaders allow debate to continue, and then create a piecemeal decision that satisfies no one.

6. Managerial competence

Too many organizations try to create leaders from people who are simply good at their jobs. To be clear, those who emerge as being very good workers often have important qualities. They are the ones who have a strong understanding of the company's products and services. They understand company goals, processes, and procedures. All of these are important.

On the other hand, being good at one's job doesn't prove that someone possesses the other competencies they need. For example, can they inspire, motivate, mentor and direct? Wang illustrates with major league baseball. While nearly all coaches have backgrounds as major league players, the most winning players aren't necessarily the most successful coaches.

7. Empowerment

A good leader has faith in their ability to train and develop the employees under them. Because of this, they have the willingness to empower those they lead to act autonomously. Wang says this comes from trusting that their team members are fully up to any challenges they face. When employees are empowered, they are more likely to make decisions that are in the best interest of the

company and the customer as well. This is true, even if it means allowing workers to go a bit off script.

8. Charisma

Simply put, people are more likely to follow the lead of those they like. The best leaders are well-spoken, approachable and friendly. They show sincere care for others.

“People at all levels of an organization find it easy to relate to them and follow their lead,” Wang concluded.

Every one of these qualities is absolutely essential to great leadership. Without them, leaders cannot live up to their full potential. As a result, their employees will never perform as well as they can either. Because of this, organizations must learn the best ways to identify and also to develop these necessary traits in existing and emerging leaders.