

Education



TAKING IT HEAD ON
To sustain the leader in you in today's corporate scenario, your leadership style must be adaptable.

Discover the leader in you

THE ALPHA

Your leadership style, though innate to a great extent, does and should vary as per the circumstances, writes V Pradeep Kumar



Know the world's most famous equation? Yes, you guessed it right! It's $E=mc^2$, formulated by Albert Einstein discovering the real power hidden in an atom.

Sunil worked as a salesman with a distributor of a company I was heading. Ambitious and hardworking, he rose to become a successful entrepreneur. A management trainee, who worked with me in another company, today runs a flourishing business group. This demonstrates examples of people who chart a new course for their life and successfully achieve what they set out to do.

We begin learning in the womb and continue until the end, as the brain has an unlimited learning capacity. Individuals have enormous hidden power like an atom, waiting to be harnessed. Swami Vivekananda, the eternal youth icon and spiritual leader said, 'We are responsible for what we are, and whatever we wish ourselves to be, we have the power to make ourselves'.

Although everyone has power within, only a few successfully harness the power within, discovering the leader in them.

Know yourself

Where does one begin discovering the leader within? 'Knowing thyself', is the first step. Benjamin Franklin, the Statesman, Diplomat and Author, observed the great difficulty of knowing one's self, "There are three things extremely hard: steel, a diamond, and to know one's self." When does one begin? Age is no barrier, to begin the process of self-discovery. Mozart-the famous musician- was just five, when he started composing and became a Music Icon. People who discovered the power within and achieving mastery in their professions at an early age include Pele, Elvis, Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein and Swami Vivekananda.

The best way to self-discovery is to ask questions, engaging critical self-analysis. Ask questions related to your knowledge and skills as well as how you relate to people around. Some introspecting questions are:

- What are you most passionate about?
- Which activities are you better at than your friends and classmates?
- Which activities you don't get bored

or tired?

- What are your most outstanding unique qualities?
- How good are you in decision making?
- What positives do people identify in you?
- Do you feel genuinely for others?
- Do you feel like helping and guiding others?
- Are you able to motivate and encourage others?

Get a professional self-analysis done through a test on reputed online sites/institutions or by consulting a Career Expert. The answers to these questions/tests will reveal your interests, skills, personality traits and accordingly lead you to a correct career choice.

Key leadership skills

The following are leadership skills essential in any career as well as highly beneficial even while you are in academic pursuit.

Initiative: Taking initiative in your assigned role and organisation is a significant leadership skill, getting the attention of senior management sets you apart in a completely new league. **Thinking:** Think intelligently and innovatively, optimizing your efficiency and influencing the organisation positively. Do remember, what Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, said, "Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower".

Motivating: A strong self-motivation separates achievers from the average. Desire,

goal-focus, positive attitude and high-energy levels are key factors, which keep oneself-motivated. True leaders understand the compelling need to motivate teammates and hence, promote a strong belief that individual growth is an outcome of organisational growth. Thus, the efforts of the team and the combined energy are highly focused, bringing synergistic results.

Ethics/value systems: In personal and professional life, means are as important as the ends. Value system is a set of lucid, harmonious principles that becomes a guidepost, in all your behavior and actions. This makes decision-making easier in challenging situations with conflicting solutions.

Balanced task and people orientation: Popularity isn't true leadership. Tactfully balancing task and people orientation, as the situation demands, ensuring people are self-motivated and achieving excellence is effective leadership. Additionally, strong communication skills and a well-groomed personality, equips you to take on the mantle of leadership in any career.

Adapting leadership style

Leadership style is an outcome of your personality traits and strengths.

Engineering, technology, and finance careers need an analytical leadership style with strengths in research, facts and figures. For a Marketing career, develop communication, high-energy levels, optimism, time

management and a participative leadership style that thrives on team and goal orientation.

However, what happens if your profession demands quick thinking and decision-making like in emergencies? Surgeons and police officers, for example, are often in situations requiring an authoritative leadership. It's important to recognize that leadership skill is always on test in unpredictable and challenging circumstances. A CEO, a surgeon or a police officer at times do take authoritative decisions as demanded by situations, but also assume their natural leadership styles such as Charismatic, Transformational, Inspirational etc.

Leadership style is therefore an outcome of an understanding of the needs of those being led and the situation too. Thus, it's contextual, varying across the spectrum of task and people orientation, as demanded. Develop a leadership style as demanded by your profession, and modify/adapt to the challenges in the context.

Learning and leadership are indispensable

Employment surveys have revealed that most employees lack leadership skills and attitude, due to which they don't grow beyond entry level. Specialized or technical skills can get you into a job but leadership skills are crucial for advancing into a rewarding career.

Recognising this feedback from industry that new recruits often lack soft skills, a number of institutions/universities offer students leadership programs, which are worth taking up. Complement this, with observing and studying true leaders through videos, speeches and books. Study and develop your own body language, like that of a leader. Mentors can identify and unlock the genius in you and hence, take their support for comprehensive career management. Begin your career with confidence and pursue these initiatives with vigor, becoming a leader and not just a follower. Progress in life from being a student to an employee to a leader, and transiting from being influenced to influencing others in a leadership role. Follow your passion and experience the difference between a job and career. Discover the leader in you and speak the language of leadership. Pursue excellence in learning and career, marching ahead with youthful zest.

Leaders and key values

Mahatma Gandhi (Determination; Motivator), Swami Vivekananda (Visionary, Inspirational), Steve Jobs (Visionary; Innovative), APJ Abdul Kalam (Creativity, Integrity), Bill Gates (Visionary, humanitarian), Ratan Tata (Conscientious, Ethical), N R Narayana Murthy (Foresight, Trust), Azim Premji (Strive for Excellence; Philanthropic), Indra Nooyi (Strategist, Competence), M S Dhoni (Hands-on, Composure).

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