




TRAITS, MOTIVES & CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERS



“To meet the challenges of today,
leaders must be able to create
organizational climates that foster not
only performance but also a sense of
pride and purpose.”

INTRODUCTION

- The belief that certain personal characteristics and skills contribute to leadership effectiveness in many situations is the **universal theory of leadership**.
- Effective leaders are made of the right stuff.
- Possessing certain characteristics contributes to leadership effectiveness.

GENERAL PERSONALITY TRAITS

- A general personality trait is a trait that would be observable within or outside the context of work.
1. **Self confidence** – Self-confidence is akin to being cool under pressure.
 2. **Honesty, integrity and credibility** – Leaders believe that honesty contributes to their effectiveness.
 3. **Dominance** – A small contributor to leadership effectiveness in many advanced countries but in Sub-Saharan and most Asian countries, dominance is considered almost synonymous with leadership.
 4. **Extroversion** – Being extroverted contributes to leadership effectiveness and extroverts are more likely to want to assume a leadership role and participate in group activities.

GENERAL PERSONALITY TRAITS

- 5. Assertiveness** – It refers to being forthright in expressing demands, opinions, feelings and attitudes. Being assertive helps leaders to perform the most difficult tasks and also deal with emergencies.
- 6. Emotional stability** – This refers to the ability to control emotions to the point that one's emotional responses are appropriate to the occasion. Stability helps because group members expect and need consistency in the way they are treated.
- 7. Enthusiasm** – Group members respond positively to enthusiasm. Enthusiasm also helps build good relationships with team members.

GENERAL PERSONALITY TRAITS

- 8. Sense of humor** – The effective use of humor is considered an important part of a leader's role. Humor helps dissolve tension, defense and conflict. Self-effacing is the stuff of comedians.
- 9. Warmth** – It facilitates the establishment of rapport with group members, it's a key component of charisma and it facilitates emotional support.
- 10. High tolerance for frustration** – Leaders encounter many frustrations that they require high tolerance or the ability to cope with the blocking of goal attainment.

GENERAL PERSONALITY TRAITS

11. Self-awareness and self-objectivity – Effective leaders and limitations are aware of strengths and limitations, enabling them to capitalize on their strengths and overcome their weaknesses.

TASK-RELATED PERSONALITY TRAITS

- Certain personality traits of effective leaders are closely associated with task accomplishment but still appear to classify more accurately as traits rather than behavior.
 1. **Initiative** – Exercising initiative, or being a self-starter, taking actions without support and stimulation from others.
 2. **Sensitive to others and empathy** – The ability to place oneself in the other person's frame of reference.
 3. **Flexibility and adaptability** – a leader must be flexible and adaptable enough to cope with change. Flexibility, or adjusting to situations is recognized as an important leadership characteristic.

TASK-RELATED PERSONALITY TRAITS

- 4. Internal locus of control** – people with an internal locus of control believe that they are the primary cause of events happening to them. A leader with an internal locus of control is perceived as more powerful than one with an external locus of control because he or she assume responsibility.
- 5. Courage** – leaders need courage to take risks and the initiative. Courage meaning behaviors such as prudent risk taking, facing up to responsibility and willingness to put one's reputation on the line.
- 6. Resiliency** – Effective leaders and managers are resilient, they bounce back quickly from setbacks such as budget cuts, donations and being fired.

LEADERSHIP MOTIVES

- Motives are the key to differentiating leaders, the following are task related:

A. The Power Motive

Effective leaders have a strong need to control resources. They vigorously exert power, think how to alter the behavior of others and care about status.

POWER MOTIVE

- 1. Personalized Power Motive** – Leaders with a personal power motive seek power mostly to further their own interests, and they enjoy dominating others.
- 2. Socialized power motive** – These types of leaders use power primarily to achieve organizational goals or a vision.
- 3. Drive and achievement motivation** – These leaders are known for the string effort they invest into achieving goals. **Achievement motivation** refers to finding joy in accomplishment for its own sake.

POWER MOTIVE

4. **A strong work ethic** – Effective leaders have a strong work ethic and a firm belief in the dignity of work.
5. **Tenacity** – leaders are better at overcoming obstacles than non-leaders. In organization, tenacity multiplies in strength because it takes longer for the new to be implemented.

COGNITIVE FACTORS & LEADERSHIP

- Intelligence (Cognitive Resource Theory)
- Knowledge of the business
- Creativity
- Insight into other people and situations
- Farsightedness
- Openness to experience

Mental Ability & the Cognitive Resource Theory

- Cognitive Resource Theory is based on two assumptions:-
 - a. Intelligent and competent leaders make more effective plans, decisions and strategies than do leaders with less intelligence or competence.
 - b. Leaders of task groups communicate their plans, decisions and action strategies primarily in the form of directive behavior.
- It is based on several hypotheses that focus on mental ability:
 - a) If a leader is experiencing stress, his or her intellectual abilities will be diverted from the task.
 - b) The intellectual abilities of directive leaders will correlate more highly with group performance than will the intellectual abilities of nondirective leaders.
 - c) A leader's intellectual abilities will be related to group performance to the degree that the task requires the use of intellectual ability.

Knowledge of the Business

- An effective leader has to be technically or professionally competent in some discipline, particularly when leading a group of specialists.
- The importance of knowledge is increasingly being recognized as an attribute of executive leadership.

Creativity

- Many effective leaders are creative in the sense that they arrive at imaginative and original solutions to complex problems.
- Creative ability lies on a continuum; some leaders are more creative than others.

Insight into people and situations

- Insight – a depth of understanding that requires considerable intuition and common sense.
- Insights also help a leader to solve business problems and make observations that others might not see.
- You can gauge your insight by charting the accuracy of your hunches and predictions about people and business situations.

Farsightedness

- To develop visions and corporate strategy, a leader needs farsightedness, the ability to understand the long-range implications of actions and policies.
- Ray Friant, among many other critics, is concerned that too many business leaders are myopic.
- Friant recommends that to develop as future business leaders, junior executives should be given long-term assignments in long-range planning and implementation.

Openness to Experience

- This refers to the positive orientation towards to learning.
- People who have a great deal of openness to experience have well-developed intellects.
- Traits commonly associated with this dimension of the intellect include being imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad-minded, intelligent and artistically sensitive.

PHYSICAL & BACKGROUND FACTORS

- A major limitation to this approach is that it is based on physical and cultural stereotypes that are changing as more diverse people gain power.
- The physical and background factors that will be reviewed here are energy and physical stamina, height and biographical factors.

PHYSICAL & BACKGROUND FACTORS

- **Energy and physical stamina** – being an effective organizational leader requires considerable energy and physical stamina. Among the demanding physical challenges facing leaders are long working hours, frequent travel and making presentations to various constituents.
- **Height** – common wisdom is that leaders are taller than non-leaders, and that being tall is an asset for commanding attention and respect of others.
- **Background factors** – Surveys of highly based executives have the following background factors: education, school attended and seniority.

The Influence of Heredity & Environment on Leadership

- Traits, motives and characteristics required for leadership effectiveness are a combination of heredity and environment.
- Personality traits and mental ability traits are based on certain inherited predispositions and aptitudes that require the right opportunity to develop.
- The physical factor of energy also sheds light on the nature-versus-nurture issues. Some people are born with a biological propensity for being more energetic than others. Yet unless that energy is properly channeled it will not help a person to become an effective leader.

The Strengths and Limitations of the Trait Approach to Leadership

- A compelling argument for the trait approach is that the evidence is convincing that leaders possess personal characteristics that differ from those of non-leaders.
- Understanding the traits of effective leaders serve as an important guide to effective guide to leadership selection.
- A limitation to the trait approach is that it does not tell us which traits are absolutely needed in which leadership situations.
- A balanced perspective on the trait approach is that certain traits, motives, and characteristics increase the probability that a leader will be effective.