

Fourteen Traits of Good Leaders

In this Chronicle of Higher Education article, Rob Jenkins (Georgia Perimeter College) says that while he and his colleagues often grouse about ineffective leaders, they actually don't mind being led. "It's just the kinds of leaders we'll tolerate," he says. "Being led is one thing, but we don't want to be dictated to, we don't want to be treated like wayward children, and we don't want to be sold a used car." Here is Jenkins's list of desirable leadership qualities:

- Listening – "A good leader doesn't think he or she knows everything, or always knows better than other people," he says.
- Inclusiveness – Effective leadership includes hearing from lots of different people before deciding.
- Delegation – It's important for a leader to give up control in areas where others know more and/or bear primary responsibility.
- Sincerity – "A good leader doesn't just pretend to listen or pretend to delegate," says Jenkins, "...or attempt to manipulate the process for personal gain."
- Decisiveness – When everyone has been heard from, leaders make up their minds and accept responsibility.
- Accountability – "A good leader is not constantly pointing fingers or blaming others for problems – even if they actually created them," he says.
- Optimism – Being positive (at least publicly) is a winning trait. "A good leader can respond to issues openly and frankly without spreading doom and gloom," says Jenkins.
- Realism – On the other hand, good leaders are objective about challenges.
- Frankness – "A good leader tells it like it is," says Jenkins. "He or she does not pat faculty and staff members on the head and assure them that everything's going to be OK when it might not be. On the other hand, good leaders are not unnecessarily unkind.
- Self-effacement – Deflecting praise and credit to others is an attractive trait. "A good leader does not always have to be the one in the spotlight – and, indeed, may actually shun the spotlight," says Jenkins. "The best leaders want others, and the institution, to look good."
- Collegiality – The good leader doesn't place him or herself above rank-and-file colleagues.
- Honesty – "No lies, no dissembling, no double-talk or administrative-speak," says Jenkins. "If the situation warrants, a good leader simply says, 'I can't comment on that right now.'"
- Trustworthiness – The best leaders keep confidences and follow through on what they say they will do.
- Morality – "When all is said and done," Jenkins concludes, "a good leader can be counted on to do what he or she believes is right and best for all concerned, even if it is unpopular in some quarters."

"What Makes a Good Leader?" by Rob Jenkins in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Mar. 8, 2013 (Vol. LIX, #26, p. A43),

<http://chronicle.com/blogs/onhiring/what-makes-a-good-leader/36725>