

# Essential Core Competencies for the **Modern-day Leader**





There is a saying that some people are natural-born leaders. In fact, most leaders today work hard learning how, and developing their skills, to work with others in order to effectively motivate and inspire. Thousands of books and articles focus specifically on the skill sets required for competent leadership. This brief article provides an overview of 10 important competencies necessary for leading.

### 1. Communicate

Creating an environment of performance and success requires the elements of sharing information and interaction. Most people working on a team are willing to do the work if they understand its purpose and receive feedback on the influencers and progress.

### 2. Develop followers and other leaders

A leader succeeds when he or she develops a structure that supports the overall objective. It is impossible to function in all necessary roles within a team. No leader is strong in every skill aspect of the business, nor can he or she be everywhere at one time. Effective leaders understand the need to utilize the individual strengths that exist within a team. Positioning strengths throughout the team creates opportunities for all team members to act as followers or leaders, depending on the current focus and need.

### 3. Focus on key issues and goals

Competent leaders understand the value of prioritizing. They teach their teams the benefit of focusing on important issues by role modeling attention to the strategic objectives and primary matters that relate to the main mission and goal. Leaders can be overexposed to unnecessary information that distracts from current priorities.

### 4. Cultivate strong relationships

Dedication. Commitment. Trust. History. Camaraderie. These words describe the important bond between leaders and their followers. Competent leaders earn their positions to lead others when they work to develop relationships with people.

### 5. Be decisive

Sometimes the win comes from the ability to pick a direction and go. Too many times, a team will fail due to a failure to act. A leader's role is to evaluate options and direction, and then choose. A team's decision-making capabilities and skills will be determined based on the pace of the leader.

### 6. Be confident

It is not the leader's responsibility to know it all or be perfect in his or her thinking and action. Competent leaders allow for a reasonable margin of error, help others learn from their mistakes and are comfortable considering ideas that conflict with their own. Their confidence comes from understanding it is not their job to have all the answers, but to consider alternative options.

### 7. Be optimistic and encouraging

Leadership requires the willingness to consistently have high expectations of self and others. It depends on the willingness to help

people understand the objectives of their jobs, allow them to make their own commitments and encourage them to reach in new directions.

## 8. Demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior

Integrity and ethics are the common competencies listed as most essential for management and leadership effectiveness. People want to be led by someone who tells the truth and whose actions parallel the organization's core beliefs and value system.

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*“Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without strategy.”*

*– General H. Norman Schwarzkopf*

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## 9. Manage conflict with diplomacy and tact

Facilitating cooperation and collaboration as the norm is a key responsibility in a leadership position. Leaders must maintain constant communication, commit to an open exchange of information, show respect and demonstrate a willingness to give, even when they do not receive information and assistance.

## 10. Maintain personal and professional balance

A leader's effectiveness increases when he or she understands the need for balancing priorities, perspective and life activities. Leaders serve their team members when they recognize the purpose of working and how it supports and enhances overall self-fulfillment and satisfaction of the individual.

Although these core competencies are important contributions to a leader's overall success, each leader will have his or her own style of leadership. How each utilizes these competencies will set him or her apart as unique and will define that leader's impact on people.



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