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THE MANAGEMENT ISSUE
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Building Your Leadership Super Powers

BY CYNTHIA THOMAS ON OCTOBER 15, 2019 ·



We've all heard the popular saying that leaders are born and not made. Yet by the same token, we have heard that great leaders are not born, but made. So which is it? Did the chicken come first or the egg? Or is it a combination of both?

Many psychological studies have tried to solve this great mystery, and it is yet to be solved. Rather than focusing on whether you happened to be standing in the wrong line when they were passing out the leadership genes but in the right line when you were named managing partner or the chair of your committee, let's identify some of superpowers or traits of a good leader.

Traits of a Great Leader

According to research by the Center for Creative Leadership, 10 core traits are the hallmarks of a good leader:

- Honesty
- Ability to delegate
- Communication
- Sense of humor
- Commitment
- Positive attitude
- Creativity
- Confidence
- Ability to inspire
- Intuition

Honesty

No matter how bad things get, something good is out there, over the horizon. —Green Lantern

Honesty is one of a leader's most valued characteristics. A true leader must be trustworthy and maintain a high level of integrity. It requires being able to accept and live truthfully in the worst situations.

Ability to delegate

You are going to struggle. So you will need to surround yourself with people you trust. —T'Chaka

There are only so many hours in a workday, and unfortunately, to be a great leader, you cannot handle all the tasks alone. Rather than struggling and doing everything by yourself, an effective leader delegates tasks to trusted members of the firm. Employees are more motivated when they believe they are part of the team and contributing to the success of the firm.

Communication

Listen, smile, agree and then do whatever you were going to do anyway. —Iron Man

Good communication involves not only clear and timely articulation but active listening. Even in times of doubt, a great leader must communicate with authority and confidence. Good communication skills allow a good leader to be a better negotiator and conflict manager.

Sense of Humor

Being a superhero is a lot of fun. —Chris Hemsworth

A leader with a sense of humor can alleviate some of the natural levels of stress that comes from working in the legal field. Laughter releases endorphins and promotes an overall sense of well-being. A sense of humor in the workplace is very important and creates a more enjoyable work environment.

Commitment

I don't do this for the money. —Batman

Employees are engaged and loyal when a leader displays a high level of commitment and belief in the firm. Leaders must lead by example. An effective leader arrives before and leaves after his or her employees. By working with their employees, shows commitment and dedication to the greater good and not just a paycheck.

Positive attitude

You are much stronger than you think you are. Trust me. —Superman

As a leader, it is important to keep your team motivated and energized. A negative environment is a toxic environment. Create a positive environment by defining a firm culture where hard work is not only expected but recognized and appreciated.

Creativity

But everybody's story begins 'once upon a time,' and it's up to us to cherish the time we're given to ensure we live happily ever after. —Scarlet Witch

The legal industry is known for being slow to change. An effective leader knows when and how to abandon rigid structures, whether it is by embracing new technology to solve challenges or allowing staff to attend client development meetings. Thinking outside the box will not only foster growth within the organization but can lead to higher profitability.

Confidence

Men fear most what they cannot see. —Batman

The ability to make decisions without having doubt, along with the ability to commit to the unknown is what separates a great leader from a not so great leader. When a leader is confident, it is easier for others to believe in him or her.

Ability to inspire

All I did was help someone find his dream. —Captain America

True leaders are not afraid of given credit where credit is due. They are excited by the success of the team and enjoy motivating and inspiring others.

Intuition

Never ignore a hunch. —Batman

Great leaders trust their gut and back it up with data. These leaders are willing to create new trends and look for ways to innovate.

Now that we have identified some of the qualities of a great leader, you might realize that you are lacking a few traits, or some of your superpowers are not so super. Well have no fear, plenty of tools are provided by the [ABA Law Practice Division](#) to help you strengthen your skills and become a great leader. From books like *Lessons in Leadership: Essential Skills for Lawyers*, by Thomas C. Grella (ABA, 2013) or *Lawyers as Managers: How to Be a Champion for Your Firm and Employees* by Andrew Elowitz and Marcia Watson Wasserman (ABA, 2017) to legal technology resources provided by the Legal Technology Resource Center, as well as a variety of webinars and in-person events such as ABA Tech Show, the Law Practice Division is your ally in your quest to become the next superhero for your organization.

About the Author

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