



The 2021 Edition of Leadership Competencies

THREE CORE QUALITIES AND FIVE PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE LEADERS WORTH FOLLOWING

The year 2020 ushered in one business challenge after another, and has forever changed the world of work. The virtual world that served as an occasional workspace is now an exclusive business domain for many. Virtual leadership requires leaders to lean into different skill sets to be worthy of following in uncertain times.

Here we share our findings on the top three competencies for leaders to nurture and demonstrate, and five principles to guide leaders worth following through uncharted waters.

Competency in these skills will inspire the people in your organization to follow your fearless lead into a future that is perhaps the most unpredictable of our lifetime.

HUMILITY, EMPATHY & COURAGE

The Three Core Competencies to Cultivate to Lead Your Organization into an Unpredictable Future

HEAD, HEART AND HANDS

Each of the three core competencies has a “Head, Heart and Hands” component. This image captures the multi-dimensional nature of leaders worth following in three succinct sentences:

The Head

Envision the future and focus on the big rocks

The Heart

Inspire and empower your people

The Hands

Execute and enable with agility

Humility makes a surprise appearance as the No. 1 competency since Socrates noted it 2,000 years ago. [Recent research shows](#) humility enables leaders to see their own skill gaps, be more likely to surround themselves with people who fill those gaps, and to more quickly realize and admit their mistakes. Humility eclipses IQ in predicting achievement, and is a super-conductor competency.

Empathy is single-handedly the most crisis-calming competency. The [2020 Study on Workplace Empathy](#) found that 90% of leaders say empathy is tied to performance, but most also underestimate its impact in increasing productivity and lowering turnover.

Courage is the competency that empowers reinvention vs. the stagnation and shrinkage marked by fear. Leaders focused on mitigating risk often end up mitigating courage. As [John Maxwell says](#), “Courage in a leader inspires commitment from followers.”

Leaders worth following will cultivate these three competencies in themselves and others, along with the ability to allow them to flow from an integration of head, heart and hands.

FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR LEADING THROUGH UNCHARTED WATERS

1) LET GO AND LEAD

Under stress, we attempt to control more than usual to compensate for the innate inability to control anything of substance. Peace abides when we let go and lead.

2) ASK GOOD QUESTIONS TO BUILD CONFIDENCE

Don't let one-off situations that don't go well erode confidence. Leaders can't possibly have all the answers. Instead of answers, focus your energy on asking great questions to elicit great solutions.

3) MONITOR THE RIGHT METRICS

Important new metrics for success are likely missing from old "profit only" scoreboards. With so much cultural and business model change happening at once, hit pause to redefine success in uncharted waters.

4) LEADERS GROW THROUGH CHANGE

Nothing is more consistent than change, a truth to which we have become more acutely acquainted. If we resist change, we fall behind and stagnate. If we open ourselves to growing through change, we learn to model a key attribute of a leader worth following.

5) HINDSIGHT IS 20/20

Leaders worth following learn not only by doing but also by looking back to assess and evaluate decisions, actions and results. Navigating uncharted waters – especially "mistakes." Reflect, adjust and breathe.

We are going to get through this. It's good to soak in that truth. No crisis lasts forever.

SOURCES: [5 Principles for Leading in Uncharted Waters](#); [The Head, Heart & Hands of Transformation](#); [Links between intellectual humility and acquiring knowledge](#); [Expressed Humility in Organizations](#); [Businessolver: Key Shifts In Leaders' Perception of Workplace Empathy](#); [The 2020 State of Workplace Empathy](#).

We need a boatload of leadership these days.

