

Leadership self-assurance and self-evaluation

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Leadership is complex. Having taught leadership and management for many years in the higher education sector - and held numerous leadership roles myself - I understand the importance of ongoing self-assurance activities and the value of self-evaluation in the process of determining whether the leader is performing appropriately. There are many principles of quality leadership espoused by many authors (I have identified 10 for the purpose of this discussion) that can be used to measure performance.

10 leadership qualities

Communication

To my mind – this is probably the big one. The process of ensuring those around you are kept informed and up to date is vital. This creates demands on the leader – it is an ongoing commitment – but the return is significant.

Problem-solving

A key element of leadership is being able to focus on – and whenever possible – solve problems that might arise. These problems can be ‘small’ or they can be ‘large’ – but the organization (and certainly the people within it) need reassurance that the leader is actively problem solving – and attempting to maintain stability.

Respect for others

Without mutual respect – little can be achieved. The role of the leader is to demonstrate (model) respect. This in turn develops a ‘culture of respect’ that will assist in developing a focused and achieving team.

Strategic Thinking

At the heart of good leadership is the task of creating a clear pathway forward for the organization. This is achieved through the development of a strategic plan/intent – that becomes a shared vision with the team. Strategic thinking is usually about *clear thinking* – with the organization (and people in it) central to the approach.

Active Listening

Active listening is critical. A leader can learn so much by being present and listening carefully to those around him/her. Some of the key ingredients include being fully present, showing interest, asking open-ended questions, paraphrasing and reflecting, and avoiding judgement.

Empathy

This is about being able to understand how another person is feeling – and seeing things from their perspective. This is often a significant challenge in a diverse working environment – but focus on this can achieve excellent outcomes.

Support

Whenever and wherever possible providing support to your team is critical. The nature of this support can vary significantly – but the key is to provide as much support as possible as the need arises.

Conflict Management

This focus is often one of the most difficult aspects of good leadership. Conflict is never an easy thing to manage in any environment. The more diverse the work force – the more complex and difficult conflict management becomes. Using empathy and active listening are excellent strategies to incorporate.

Team development and empowering

A focus on teamwork and empowering people can be hugely advantageous. If people feel empowered (and trusted) they usually achieve quality outcomes. This focus often incorporates mentoring – a key ingredient of succession planning.

Adaptability

If one can learn to adapt – this can make such a difference to the organization and the people within it. Set ideas and agenda seldom work. Being able to adapt and morph (so to speak) are so important in the 'contemporary' organization.

Importance of self-reflection

A good leader (and certainly the ones I have met and written/talked about) have all demonstrated a willingness and an ability to self-reflect. This often required working with a more experienced mentor or at least reflecting on good leadership that they have witnessed or experienced.

Using the 10 leadership qualities cited can be a useful starting point. Essentially, a good leader needs to be reflective and open to both positive and negative feedback.

Team feedback can be used effectively

A most useful tool is an independent (anonymous) survey that gives staff the opportunity to in turn reflect on the work of their leader – and again the 10 leadership qualities can be used as the framework for this feedback.

I recently requested my team (through an independent consultant to maintain anonymity) to rate my performance over the last 12 months -

Communication	4.9
Problem solving	4.7
Respect for others	4.9
Strategic thinking	4.9
Active listening	4.8
Empathy	4.8
Support	4.8
Conflict management	4.8
Team development and empowering	4.9
Adaptability	4.8
OVERALL	4.83

The overall score of 4.83/5 was a satisfying outcome (based on a 90% return) and gives me the opportunity to improve in the areas that scored lower than hoped – *problem solving* (in my case) being an area of focus moving forward.

Leadership is not easy. In fact - leadership is not everyone's 'cup of tea'. If you are in a leadership position it is critical that you self-assure and self-reflect as much as possible (with a little help from a mentor and staff feedback).

Also worth reading –

Transformational leadership and the new reality (April 2025) - [6113ad_94f769b047444a0082b26903741fa569.pdf](#)

Understanding emotional intelligence (EI) – and applying it to your leadership style and approach (May 2025) - [6113ad_688b923e84e44169b9420f3e8fd5d126.pdf](#)

Good governance is about leadership not management (August 2025) - [6113ad_4a2ffc930bcf4f8c81f115677e00326a.pdf](#)

On being a good leader (August 2025) - [6113ad_2c220d567e0f48099a4b89a57269c100.pdf](#)

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