33 Ways to Define Leadership

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Webster's Dictionary defines leadership as "the power or ability to lead other people," but for most people, there's a lot more to it than that.

Ask anyone what it means to be a leader, and you'll likely hear something unique every time. That's because everyone has his or her own idea of what leadership is, but not every boss leads a team the same way. Some people think leadership means guiding others to complete a particular task, while others believe it means motivating the members of your team to be their best selves. But while the definitions may vary, the general sentiments remain the same: Leaders are people who know how to achieve goals and inspire people along the way.

So how do you define leadership? Business News Daily asked business owners, managers and experts to explain what leadership means to them. Here are 33 different ways to define leadership.

"Leadership is the ability to not only understand and utilize your innate talents, but to also effectively leverage the natural strengths of your team to accomplish the mission. There is no one-size fits all approach, answer key or formula to leadership. Leadership should be the humble, authentic expression of your unique personality in pursuit of bettering whatever environment you are in." – *Katie Christy, founder, Activate Your Talent*

"Leadership is about having a selfless heart and always being willing to reach out and lend a helping hand." – *Bob Reina, CEO and founder, Talk Fusion*

"To me, leadership is about playing to strengths and addressing weaknesses in the most productive and efficient way possible. It's about knowing your team and yourself, and doing your best job to set both up for success." – *Sammy Cohen, co-founder, Neon Bandits*

"Leadership is the ability to see a problem and be the solution. So many people are willing to talk about problems or can even empathize, but not many can see the problem or challenge and rise to it. It takes a leader to truly see a problem as a challenge and want to drive toward it. That is what causes people to want to follow, and a true leader has a following." – *Andrea Walker-Leidy, owner, Walker Publicity Consulting*

"Leadership is having the humility to put your employees first so that the company can grow. Leaders should invest time [in] employees and make sure that they feel comfortable in the workplace. This increases the functionality and efficiency of the company." – *Matthew Adams, director of communications, Tru-Colour Bandages*

"A leader is someone [who] leads by example and has the integrity to do the right thing even when it is not popular. A good leader has positive influence over others, inspiring them to become a better person and example for others to model their life against, as well." – *Mark Little, founder and president, Diversified Funding*

"Leadership is serving the people that work for you by giving them the tools they need to succeed. Your workers should be looking forward to the customer and not backwards, over their shoulders, at you. It also means genuine

praise for what goes well and leading by taking responsibility early and immediately if things go bad." – *Jordan French, president, BNB Shield*

"Leadership is the ability to unapologetically express and see out your business vision. Leadership is using your intuition to guide you, and inspiring your team to come along for the ride. Leadership is listening to that 'inner voice,' even when it is risky, scary, and challenging the status quo." – *Makenzie Marzluff, founder, Delighted By*

"Leadership is the ability to help people achieve things they don't think are possible. Leaders are coaches with a passion for developing people, not players; they get satisfaction from achieving objectives through others. Leaders inspire people through a shared vision and create an environment where people feel valued and fulfilled." – *Randy Stocklin, co-founder and CEO, Readers.com*

"Leadership is having a vision, sharing that vision and inspiring others to support your vision while creating their own." – *Mindy Gibbins-Klein, founder, REAL Thought Leaders* **[See Related Story: What Is Leadership?]**

"Leadership is the ability to guide others without force into a direction or decision that leaves them still feeling empowered and accomplished." – *Lisa Cash Hanson, CEO, Snuggwugg*

"Effective leadership is providing the vision and motivation to a team so they work together toward the same goal, and then understanding the talents and temperaments of each individual and effectively motivating each person to contribute individually their best toward achieving the group goal." – *Stan Kimer, president, Total Engagement Consulting by Kimer*

"Leadership is the art of serving others by equipping them with training, tools and people as well as your time, energy and emotional intelligence so that they can realize their full potential, both personally and professionally." – *Daphne Mallory, family business expert, The Daphne Mallory Company*

"Leadership is being bold enough to have vision and humble enough to recognize achieving it will take the efforts of many people — people who are most fulfilled when they share their gifts and talents, rather than just work. Leaders create that culture, serve that greater good and let others soar." – *Kathy Heasley, founder and president, Heasley & Partners*

"My perspective of a leader is an individual who knows the ins and outs about the business so they can empathize with followers. In addition to being a positive influence on the people they are leading, leadership is about setting the tone, motivating, inspiring, thinking big, and never [giving] up when others feel like quitting." – *Alexis Davis, founder and designer, Hoo-Kong by Alexis Davis*

"A true leader is secure in creating a framework that encourages others to tap into their own skills and ideas and freely contribute to the whole of the project or company." – *Judy Crockett, owner, Interactive Marketing & Communication*

"In my experience, leadership is about three things: To listen, to inspire and to empower. Over the years, I've tried to learn to do a much better job listening actively, making sure I really understand the other person's point of view, learning from them, and using that basis of trust and collaboration to inspire and empower. [It's about] setting the bar high, and then giving them the time and resources to do great work." – *Larry Garfield, president, Garfield Group*

"I define leadership as knowing when to be in front to lead and guide a team during the journey, and when to step back and let others take the lead. Much like an athlete who knows exactly what position to move to on the field at any given time, a true business leader understands the delicate balance of how to help others become leaders, fuel career ambitions, then give them the chance to shine." – *Dan Schoenbaum, CEO, Redbooth*

"Too many people view management as leadership. It's not. Leadership comes from influence, and influence can come from anyone at any level and in any role. Being open and authentic, helping to lift others up and working

toward a common mission, build influence. True leadership comes when those around you are influenced by your life in a positive way." – *Kurt Uhlir, CEO and co-founder, Sideqik*

"Leadership is when someone is willing to stand up front to be either the target or the hero to take responsibility for the success or failure of a given goal. Not everyone has the guts to be a leader and [take] personal risks that they may encounter." – *Darlene Tenes, founder and designer, CasaQ*

"Leadership is stepping out of your comfort zone and taking risk to create reward." – *Katie Easley, founder, Kate Ryan Design*

"A leader is someone who has the clarity to know the right things to do, the confidence to know when she's wrong and the courage to do the right things even when they're hard." – *Darcy Eikenberg, founder, RedCapeRevolution.com*

"Leadership is the behavior that brings the future to the present, by envisioning the possible and persuading others to help you make it a reality." – *Matt Barney, founder and CEO, LeaderAmp*

"Leadership is caring more about the cause and the people in your company than about your own personal pain and success. It is about having a greater vision of where your company is trying to go while leaving the path open for others to grow into leaders." – *Jarie Bolander, COO and co-founder, Lab Sensor Solutions*

"A leader is a person who takes you where you will not go alone." – *Susan Ascher, CEO, founder and president, SusanAscher.com*

"Leadership means using one's influence to help guide others in successfully achieving a goal without desire for recognition, without worry of what others think and with awareness of issues, internal or external, that might change the results sought." – *Marie Hansen, dean of the college of business, Husson University*

"Leadership is not about finding ways to lead better or to motivate your team. It's about being there from the beginning as equals and becoming a mentor when they need you to be one." –*Michael Womack, co-founder, hovelstay.com*

"Leadership styles differ, but at the core, good leaders make the people they are leading accomplish more than they otherwise would. The most effective leaders do this not through fear, intimidation or title, but rather by building consensus around a common goal." – *Tom Madine, CEO and president, Worldwide Express*

"Leadership is inspiring others to pursue your vision within the parameters you set, to the extent that it becomes a shared effort, a shared vision and a shared success." – *Steve Zeitchik, CEO of Focal Point Strategies*

"For me, leadership is an act — a decision to take a stand, or step, in order to encourage, inspire or motivate others to move with you. What's more, the most effective leaders do not rely on their title, or positional power, to lead. Rather, their ability to use their own personal power combined with their use of strategic influence are what make them effective." – *Kendra Coleman, consultant, Sheppard Moscow*

"Leadership is the ability to take an average team of individuals and transform them into superstars. The best leader is the one who inspires his workers to achieve greatness each and every day." – *Jonas Falk, CEO, OrganicLife*

"Leadership is influencing others by your character, humility and example. It is recognizable when others follow in word and deed without obligation or coercion." – *Sonny Newman, president, EE Technologies*

"Leadership is the collective action of everyone you influence. Your behavior — your actions and your words — determines how you influence. Our job as leaders is to energize whatever marshals action within others." – *David Casullo, president, Bates Communications*