

Are you a genuine leader?

IESE's Guido Stein argues that influence, connection, commitment, vision and authenticity are the essential ingredients to the four levels of leadership.

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Anticipating problems; building a team with mutual trust; maintaining self-control, common sense and energy: These are not concepts lifted from the latest book on management. They come from *Cyropaedia*, a treatise written by Xenophon in the fourth century B.C. describing the life of King Cyrus, who laid the ideological foundation for what would later become the empire of Alexander the Great.

Following this seminal work — considered the first to analyze the foundations of "leadership" in a systematic way — countless pages have been written on the elusive concept. In a technical note titled "[The Roots of Leadership](#)," IESE's [Guido Stein](#) separates the wheat from the chaff, dispelling myths to get to the qualities that a true leader must have.

Five essential ingredients

Leadership and personal effectiveness are virtually inseparable. Experience shows that some executives invest a great deal of time, effort and concentration into their work but may not achieve as much as other executives in comparable situations. Effective managers need to lead effective teams to optimize results. Moreover, true leaders cannot get by on talent alone. They also need the right attitude and five key capabilities:

1. **Influence.** One gauge for measuring the effectiveness of people's leadership is the respect and quality of their immediate circle.
2. **Orientation.** As Solomon recalls in the Proverbs: where there is no vision, the people perish. Setting the course requires intuition that is grounded in experience

and supported by a method. Leaders know how to step back to see the big picture and also zoom in to see the details and take action.

3. **Connection.** Leaders know how to reach others and be natural, sincere and coherent in communication. Good communication also requires knowledge, adaptability and confidence in those being spoken to.
4. **Prioritization.** Leaders are able to identify top priorities and feel comfortable making decisions. If they know how to put first things first, their followers will recognize what is relevant at each moment.
5. **Delegation.** After assembling their network of collaborators, leaders know how to delegate and learn not to meddle in others' work. To multiply effectiveness, they must ultimately lead other leaders.

The scope of leadership

There are four different levels of leadership:

1. **Position.** We start with the level of leadership that comes along with a job title. Being the boss means giving orders that subordinates will follow out of duty. This type of leadership is necessary for an organization to function, but more is needed to unlock the full potential of its people.
2. **Permission.** At this level, the leader, in addition to having authority backed by the job title, builds good personal relationships with peers who, in turn, are willing to put in extra effort. In so doing they feel valued, which fosters a good working environment.
3. **Production.** Apart from a positive atmosphere, the leader shows commitment to the organization by achieving concrete objectives. Leaders get it done. Reaching goals speaks louder than any other message.
4. **People development.** Being liked by employees and hitting production targets only ensures short-term effectiveness. The leader must also look further down the road and focus on adding value for the company and its stakeholders. That will earn them loyalty.
5. **Advancing to the next level takes time.** In fact, leaders' relationships can vary from one peer to another. For some, perhaps a leader is merely the boss (first level). For others, they may also enjoy a good relationship with the leader (second level); and certain others may extend their loyalty and commitment (up to the fourth level).

From the authentic self to the authentic leader

Healthy leadership requires a good degree of self-awareness. However, in the business world, where superficiality affects relationships, inauthentic selves may flourish because they may be easier to adapt to certain organizational policies.

Many executives project a false image of themselves to the point that they are no longer capable of being their genuine selves as leaders. This lack of authenticity may manifest itself in a lack of curiosity, creativity and spontaneity. Conversely, inhabiting one's true self brings balance, focus and confidence. It also opens the door to being spontaneous and natural enough to have close relationships with others.

Companies need leaders who are psychologically mature with their self-esteem and humility in balance. The entire team knows what drives these leaders and they know how to read the hearts and minds of colleagues just as they can read the reality of the business.

As a result, everyone knows they are on the same team and that their purpose is a common good. Out of mutual respect comes commitment and dedication — two essential ingredients for creating robust organizations whose purpose is none other than to enable ordinary people to achieve extraordinary things. Ultimately, it is a concept that has hardly changed since the time of Xenophon.

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