# What Makes an Effective Leader?

The moment we decide to become a caller we have effectively stepped into a leaders role

Leaders shape our teams, organizations, communities, and world.

We need good leaders to help guide us and make the essential decisions, big and small, that keep things moving forward.

It's easy for us to pick out people who make bad leaders…and it is also easy to pick out people who are good at the craft.

Here are 12 essential traits that helps us become become better leaders

1. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the understanding of yourself, including personality traits, behaviors, anxieties, and emotions. This is a more inwardly focused trait, self-awareness and humility are paramount qualities of leadership. The better you understand yourself and recognize your own strengths and weaknesses, the more effective you can be as a leader.

2. Respect
Respect…when demonstrated consistently…is one of the most important things a leader can do. It helps ease tensions and conflict…builds trust, and improves your effectiveness. When you truly value other people's perspectives and opinions is when you become more effective as a team. Inclusion is big in companies now and should also be part of your square dance business…Showing favoritism towards one group and omitting another in the club can reduce your ability to be an effective leader.

3. Compassion
Compassion is more than simply showing empathy or even listening and seeking to understand. Compassion requires leaders to act on what they learn. After someone shares a concern or speaks up about something, they won't feel truly heard if their leader doesn't then take some type of meaningful action on the information…For example, if one of your dancers states that they are having a bad day…find out what it is that made their day bad…And ask how you can help…Small things like this is what fosters trust in your club.

4. Vision
Vision is your aspiration for the future. Motivating others and garnering commitment toward that vision are essential parts of leadership. You'll want to communicate the vision in ways that help others understand it, remember it…and just know that they will hold you accountable to that vision.

5. Communication
Communication shows up in many ways, from transmitting information and storytelling to soliciting input and using active listening techniques. They say 80/20 is the best plan for effective communication…80 percent listening and 20 percent talking…Effective leadership and effective communication are intertwined. The best leaders are skilled communicators who can

communicate in a variety of ways…we need to be able to teach…demonstrate…explain…answer and enunciate commands to a wide range of people from different backgrounds…ages…and levels of intellect.

6. Learning Agility
Learning agility is the ability to know what to do when you don't know what to do. If you're a "quick study" …you might already be learning agile. Great leaders are really great learners.

7. Collaboration
Collaboration is a characteristic shown when leaders work effectively with members of the club who each have their own role…Great leaders can delegate and share the responsiblities…Having more than one brain working as a team helps foster collaboration which in turn can yield effective ideas on how to run the club more effectively. How many clubs have just the president and secretary?? What about the social club…In Maryland…one of the local clubs had a "fun bunch" committee who was in charge of banner stealing and organizing public outing events that the club would partake in.

8. Influence
Influence, or being able to persuade people through thoughtful use of appropriate influencing tactics, is an important trait of inspiring, effective leaders. It's selling yourself…selling your own ideas and getting others to agree that your plan or idea is the best for the club…As a leader, you must be able to influence others to get the work done — you cannot do it all alone.

9. Integrity
Integrity is being consistent, honest, moral, and trustworthy. So say what you mean and back that up with meaningful action…You have to be honest and demonstrate integrity for other's to view you to be an effective leader.

10. Courage
Courage enables both club members and callers to take bold actions that move things in the right direction. It can be hard to speak up at a club for fear that you might be replaced…whether you want to voice a new idea or provide feedback to an existing idea or plan that the club is implementing…It takes courage…Especially the courage to provide additional feedback, ideas and strategies to assist groups in their focus and perspective on matters.

11. Gratitude
Gratitude is the uplifting emotion experienced after receiving something of value. Being thankful can lead to higher self-esteem…reduced depression and anxiety. Sincere gratitude…thanking people for coming to your dance…can even make you a better leader.

12. Resilience
Resilience is more than the ability to bounce back from obstacles and setbacks — it's the ability to respond adaptively to challenges. Having the patience and fortitude to continue through tough times will make you a better leader and more respected amongst your peers.