20 Leadership Fundamentals

1. **Trust is vital.** You must trust the people on your team. In the words of Frank Crane, “You may be deceived if you trust too much, but you will live in torment if you do not trust enough.”

2. **A leader must be a good teacher.** The leader must be willing to teach skills, to share insights and experiences, and to work closely with people to help them mature and be creative.

3. **A leader should let subordinates solve most problems.** General George Patton advised: “Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.”

4. **A leader must be a communicator.** Leaders must be good writers, editors, speakers and listeners. A dynamic communicator can motivate people to want to go to work committed to doing an even better job than in the past.

5. **A leader must manage time well and use it effectively.** Leaders must work smarter, not harder. Allow open time every day for thinking and dealing with crises and problems of your team members. Learn to say “no” to time wasters.

6. **Leaders should trust their intuition.** To quote Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The essence of genius is spontaneity and instinct. Trust thyself.” Part of intuition is having your “antennae” out and keeping your hand on the pulse of the team.

7. **Leaders must be willing to remove people for cause.** You owe it to the team and to the success of the project to remove those who stand in the way.

8. **Leaders must take care of their people.** Be concerned about your team members’ personal and professional objectives and thank them for their efforts.

9. **Leaders must provide vision.** Leaders plan, set goals and provide a vision of the completed project; then they communicate the vision to the team.

10. **Leaders must subordinate their ambitions and egos to the goals of the team that they lead.** The selfless leader gains the respect of subordinates and the support of superiors.

11. **Leaders must know how to run meetings.** Much of a leader’s time is spent in meetings. Fight the cultural tendency to hold long, undisciplined meetings with little useful output.

12. **Leaders must understand the decision-making and implementation process.** How are decisions made? What decisions do leaders want made by team members? What decisions should be made by higher authority? Decisions are of little value if they are not implemented, so leaders must have an implementation and follow-up strategy.

13. **Leaders must be visible and approachable.** Leaders should be with their team, not stuck behind a desk all the time. When dealing with a team member, make that person feel that nothing else matters except what is on that person’s mind.

14. **Leaders must have a sense of humor.** Leaders should let people know that life is not so important that you can’t sit back occasionally and be amused by what’s happening. Humor can be a great reliever of tension; a story or joke at a time of crisis or difficulty can be very therapeutic.

15. **Leaders must be decisive, but patiently decisive.** Leaders should listen to all sides before deciding. On occasion they may postpone an important decision until additional information is available. Look for contrasting views. But remember that a non-decision is itself a decision. Risk taking is frequently an essential and healthy aspect of decision-making.

16. **Leaders should be introspective.** Leaders should be able to look at themselves objectively and analyze where they have made mistakes and learn from them.

17. **Leaders should be reliable.** A leader should be careful about what commitments are made; but once commitments are firm, nothing short of major health problems or a very serious crisis should alter them.

18. **Leaders should be open-minded.** The best leaders are the ones whose minds are never closed, who are interested in hearing new points of view and who are eager to deal with new issues.

19. **Leaders should establish and maintain high standards of dignity.** When standards of dignity are established, everyone can take pride in both the accomplishments and the style of the operation. A happy combination of substance and style leads to high performance and morale.

20. **Leaders should exude integrity.** Leaders should not only talk about it; they must operate at a high level of integrity. Of all the qualities a leader must have, integrity is the most important.