As John C. Maxwell once said, “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way.” Leadership and Entrepreneurship go hand in hand. As an entrepreneur and as a leader, you are setting an example for others to follow, and are trying to surround yourself with capable people to make your business more successful. As someone who is thinking about opening their own business, you need to make sure that you have the qualities it takes to be a good leader.

If you are someone like me, then you like to make plans, are focused, and think of yourself as someone who tries to complete a job as perfectly as possible. When you work in teams, do you want to schedule at least a few meetings in advance to make sure that the work gets done? And do you appreciate dividing up tasks for the sake of efficiency? Good job — these characteristics all show that you and I have great organizational skills, and understand why it is important to delegate.

However, this mindset is not quite enough to make you a good leader. There are more qualities that make someone a great leader than just your productivity. Most importantly, you need to find a good balance between character and competence. While it is important to channel productivity and have the big picture in mind, it is equally important to be personable and get people to trust and follow you. Unless people think you are trustworthy and fair, you won’t be able to inspire and motivate your team!

Apart from the obvious qualities that great leaders share, such as charisma, dedication, inspiration, commitment, passion, and confidence, the following are the six most important traits to have:

1. **Honesty** is the best policy: Honesty makes truly great leaders. You cannot be a great leader while lying or trying to cover things up. You are much more likely to repeat past mistakes if you are
dishonest. Most importantly: How is your team supposed to trust you if you are not honest with them? And if you are dishonest with others, aren't you a little dishonest with yourself, too?

2. **Focus** on yourself, others, and your surroundings: Even if you are facing challenges in your team or you have multiple projects going at the same time, it is utterly important that a good leader keeps his or her focus. You need to be able to prioritize and focus on yourself, on others, and on your surroundings to be a successful leader.

3. **Patience** goes a long way: Patience takes some time and effort and is not something that comes naturally to everyone. If you are a patient leader, it will improve employee and other business relationships, and you will be known as a tolerant person. Nobody wants to have “impulsive Trump” as a boss or as an equal business partner, right?

4. **Vision** shapes future realities: As a good leader, it is important to be able to visualize and articulate a possible future state for your company. Sharing your vision is one of the main motivators for your team, and it also drives you and the business into the right direction.

5. **Open-mindedness** translates to success: The ability to change and flexibility are must-haves for a good leader. As Pepsi CEO Indra Nooyi said, “Leading with an open mind means not only questioning everything your business does, but also having the courage to act on what you see and hear, sometimes in new ways.”

6. **Integrity** is your moral handbook: Integrity means doing the right thing because it’s the right thing to do. It makes you realistic and fair. What is important to remember is that if you compromise integrity in small situations, then it also becomes very easy to compromise integrity in the bigger situations.

If you already live by some of these behavioral qualities in your personal environment, practice them in your daily life with friends, or use them at your job, it is a good indicator for your potential as a leader.

One of the biggest takeaways that I personally found while writing this was that these qualities actually can be learned. The phrase “Great leaders are born that way” is actually a myth. Some people might be better at certain things, but almost no one is born naturally good at all this. Through life experiences, jobs, and your education, you will learn to embody and use these qualities. I am also a firm believer in the idea that you never stop learning and improving yourself in your life. Also, there are specific leadership programs available that can help you feel more secure about leadership, and a mentor can teach you a lot from personal experience as well.

Be patient with yourself and others next week,

Anastasia

P.S. This week's word is “Leadership,” which translates into German as “Führung.”