

# Why Curiosity Is the Greatest Leadership Trait of All

May 17, 2018 / Evan Hackel (<https://www.success.com/author/evan-hackel/>) / No Comments (<https://www.success.com/why-curiosity-is-the-greatest-leadership-trait-of-all/#respond>)



If you ask a group of people to describe strong leaders, chances are you will hear some replies like these:

- “Leaders look strong. By their strong physical presence, they convince others to follow them.”
- “Leaders are highly articulate. Their strong voices and powerful

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‘A leader is one who knows the

language motivate people.”

- “Leaders are decisive. They are the first to make a decision and take action.”
- “Leaders are charismatic. When they enter a room, they attract notice.”

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We have all heard opinions like these about leadership. Yet in my opinion, they are flawed, and untrue a lot of the time. Are some leaders tall and good looking, with booming voices? Yes, but that is not where the essence of leadership is found. If you doubt that opinion, let me point to a group of notable leaders who do not possess those traits at all:

- **Stephen Hawking** was one of the world’s greatest scientists and transformative thought leaders, yet he suffered from physical limitations.
- **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**, Supreme Court justice, has one of the keenest legal minds anywhere, but does she speak in a booming, compelling voice? Hardly at all.
- **Jeff Bezos**, CEO of Amazon, has revolutionized retailing and business, but does he attract attention because of his commanding appearance?
- **The Dalai Lama and Pope Francis** exude powerful spirituality that has changed the way people think, yet they seem self-effacing and modest.
- **Sheryl Sandberg**, COO of Facebook and author of the highly influential book *Lean In*, is a visionary leader who is changing the role women play in the world, but in her demeanor, she seems modest and quiet.

I think you will agree that all those very different people are important leaders. They have a lot in common. They are all empathetic and intelligent. They are all able to identify, understand and express very big ideas and concepts. But I would like to offer my opinion that their ability to lead can be found in another trait that they all share...

#### ***They are all extremely curious people.***

In fact, they have devoted their lives to finding new solutions to old problems, new ways to motivate people, new ways to think and even new ways to behave. While other people seem to think that once they have found a solution (<http://www.success.com/article/think-slow->

way, goes the way, and shows the way.’



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and-other-tricks-for-better-problem-solving), they can stop looking for new ideas, great leaders tirelessly go on pursuing the new and the better.

In them all, you will see patterns of curiosity like these:

## **1. Great leaders practice “Ingaged Leadership.”**

That means they are much more interested in listening to others (<http://www.success.com/article/9-tips-to-become-a-better-listener>) than in listening to themselves. They are curious to hear and learn from younger people, older people and people whose backgrounds are different from their own. Instead of shutting people out, they invite them in. They are constantly looking for ideas that are new and better, and when they hear concepts with potential, they tirelessly explore them.

## **2. Great leaders are intensely curious about ideas that come from fields like art, literature, philosophy and more.**

We know, for example, that Steve Jobs studied beautiful objects and wanted all his products to not only work well, but to be highly attractive. Could his products have been as successful if they simply worked well? Possibly, but his curiosity made Apple products unique in the marketplace.

## **3. Great leaders are constantly looking for new and better solutions.**

While other people keep applying ideas that have worked well enough in the past, good leaders are on the lookout for ideas (<http://www.success.com/blog/5-steps-to-better-business-ideas>) that are dramatically new and better.

## **4. Great leaders are open to being proven wrong.**

In fact, they set their egos aside and surround themselves with people whose ideas could be better (<http://www.success.com/blog/why-smart-people-surround-themselves-with-smarter-people>) than their

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These activities build deeper and more meaningful relationships among co-workers, which then helps you work more effectively together.

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own.

## 5. Great leaders admit their own limitations and ask for help when they need it.


In this way, they put no upper limits on their ability to grow. When he started out, did Jeff Bezos know everything there was to know about the technology that he later used to build Amazon.com? Probably not, but he showed the curiosity to ask the right people the right questions.


Every day offers opportunities to listen to new ideas, learn new things and try something different. If curiosity is the key to great leadership—and I believe it is—you can start building your leadership today simply by being curious.


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