



What would you say are the top 10 skills that every leader needs to have?

What about the top five?

Or three or even one?

It's not so easy to answer, is it?

And there's not one right answer.

If you look up online or in a management book, what are the top leadership skills, you're going to get a lot of different answers.

You'll certainly see a lot of the same ones- things like communication and integrity and vision, but there's a lot of freedom in deciding which skills are most important to you when it comes to the work you're doing and it comes to the vision that you have.

No matter what that vision is, there's no way for anybody to be equally wonderful at all the many skills that are out there.

Even someone as wonderful as you are.

Prioritizing which skills are most important is going to help you really focus in a way that is going to make the process manageable and effective because you're only focusing on those skills that are most going to get you where you want to go.

It matters because you need skills to be successful in whatever it is you're doing as does your team and again, you can't be good at everything.

You have to figure out which skills are most important to invest in in terms of growing and developing.

This was a little exercise I did to simulate the exercise that you can do which is starting off with a brainstorm.

You can do this for yourself as a leader and then you can work with your team to go through this for themselves based on their own position.

This took me all of I don't know 45 seconds just to come up with a quick list. I think the answers are pretty fabulous, but you have every right to disagree and say well, why didn't you put this on the list and this one's not so important and I would have put this and whatever. That's part of the process- coming up with your own list.

I just wanted to give you an example and to show you that yes, this is the work that I do for a living but this should not take you very long because when you think about it, there are so many skills that go into the work that you do.



It will hopefully be fairly easy for you to populate your own. I want to say for the record, skills are definitely important, but- and I am putting that but in there with full intention. As a trained social worker and coach, I have been taught to be very cautious when using the word but because it negates everything that comes before it. So I am doing this with intention because yes, skills are important to your growth as a leader, but they are one piece of the puzzle and in my humble opinion, they are the least impactful and important piece of the puzzle.

When I was creating my framework of Lead With your MIND, I wish I could have worked out the letters where skills were at the end because generally in leadership development they become the focus and the center and to me they should come at the end after you've established your leadership mindset and you're willingness to invest in growth and your desire to do this job.

If you're all skill and you don't have the other components, you will never be a thriving leader. You can be good and even competent, but you're not going to be great.

If you have the other three components- if you have the leadership mindset, the investment, and the desire that's going to forgive a lot in the skill department. It doesn't mean you can be completely unskilled or have no idea what you're doing, but those are the things that are going to carry you as a leader- focusing on those three areas and not to get rid of the skills again. I'm not saying they're unimportant, but they're just one piece of that leadership puzzle.

I'm going to ask you to do this exercise with me and let me explain it first and then I'll have you pause the video and go ahead and do the exercise that will just take a minute or two. I want you to think about the best leader you've ever had and if you haven't had the opportunity to be led by someone wonderful, think of someone in the world in your world who you think is a fabulous leader. Then make a list of five or so things that you think made them so great.

Then I want you to think of someone who's the worst leader you've ever had. I hope you haven't had one, so again think of someone you know, or someone in the public eye and then make a list of five or so things that make them so bad.

Okay, so go ahead and pause the video and make your lists.

Okay, welcome back.

If you didn't do the exercise and you didn't pause the video you're going to feel as weird as I do. Just everything about videos is so weird, but when I have people do exercises like that and I say pause the video, I only pause for a breath and then I keep going so it's just this weird time warp thing.

But anyway, I hope you did stop and I hope you made your list.

The reason I do this is it's good to reflect on anything when it comes to leadership and



particularly what you think makes a great leader or not and also to highlight.

I especially love to do this in a group because generally what people list as the reasons that make someone great or not are rarely skills. Or they're at the very least rarely hard skills. Generally people list things like, they were so great because they had great empathy. Or vision. Or they really cared about me as a person.

For the worst leaders, they say things like, they were really dishonest or unethical or cruel even. When it comes to leaders that make an impact in a very strong way, one way or the other it doesn't usually have to do with skill.

You don't usually get things on the list like, 'oh boy- could she run a staff meeting?'

Or 'you should have seen him make that deadline', right?

So yes, sometimes skills pop up, but generally the way that leaders and you as a leader can have impact is in those not skills, soft skills, emotional intelligence skills- that is really what people respond to.

When you're going through this exercise you make your big old list make it as long and big as you possibly can. Then as you start to narrow it down, you can narrow it down to maybe five to 10 of those skills that you think are really most important in your work as a leader and involve your team in the process.

Ask them what they think are the 10 biggest skills for you to have as a leader and see where there's agreement and disagreement.

When you choose your five to 10 you can decide which ones you think you're already pretty good at and which ones you need to grow and again involve your team because your answers might be very different.

Balance old and new skills.

There might be some things that you've been working on forever and you might continue to work on forever but be adding new skills in there too over time.

When you reach a particular level of competence with a certain skill, maybe it's time to remove it from your list and add another one.

Of course, we don't get better at anything just by wishing for it, so come up with how you plan to invest in growing in that skill as well as how you plan to evaluate it if it's a skill that can be numerically evaluated.

That's always the easiest. You raise a certain amount of money, a certain number of kids graduated high school, those numbers are a lot easier but many of the things we work on aren't so objectively easy to measure but come up with a way to evaluate them.



Then have your team go through the same process with their own skills. Let them drive the process and act as support for them just as they acted as support for you when you went through your own list.

So the most important question for you is, what are the most important skills for you and your team to develop? Let go of the expectation that you're all going to be equally wonderful at all the many things there are to be wonderful at in this world.

You have got to pick and choose to make it manageable and make your team successful and make yourself successful. Give yourself credit for the wonderful job you're doing and don't always focus on the things you're not doing.