

# Leadership Values and Ethics

## Secrets of Leadership Success

By [Susan M. Heathfield](#)

Leaders know what they value. They also recognize the importance of ethical behavior. The best leaders exhibit both their values and their ethics in their leadership style and actions. Your leadership ethics and values should be visible because you live them in your actions every single day.

A lack of trust is a problem in many workplaces. If leaders never identified their values in these workplaces, the mistrust is understandable. People don't know what they can expect. If leaders have identified and shared their values, living the values daily, visibly will create trust. To say one sentiment and to do another will damage trust - possibly forever. In [Trust Rules: The Most Important Secret](#), three constructs of trust are explored. Dr. Duane C. Tway calls trust a construct because it is "constructed" of these three components: "the capacity for trusting, the perception of competence, and the perception of intentions."

Workplace ethics take the same route. If the organization's leadership has a code of conduct and ethical expectations, they become an organization joke if the leaders fail to live up to their published code. Leaders that exhibit ethical behavior powerfully influence the actions of others.

### Choose Your Leadership Values

The following are examples of values. You might use these as the starting point for discussing values within your organization:

ambition, competency, individuality, equality, integrity, service, responsibility, accuracy, respect, dedication, diversity, improvement, enjoyment/fun, loyalty, credibility, honesty, innovativeness, teamwork, excellence, accountability, empowerment, quality, efficiency, dignity, collaboration, stewardship, empathy, accomplishment, courage, wisdom, independence, security, challenge, influence, learning, compassion, friendliness, discipline/order, generosity, persistency, optimism, dependability, flexibility

As a leader, choose the values and the ethics that are most important to you, the values and ethics you believe in and that define your character. Then live them visibly every day at work. Living your values is one of the most powerful tools available to you to help you lead and influence others. Don't waste your best opportunity.

## Characteristics of a Successful Leadership Style

Much is written about what makes successful leaders. I will focus on the characteristics, traits and actions that, I believe, are key.

- [Choose to lead.](#)
- [Be the person others choose to follow.](#)
- [Provide vision for the future.](#)
- [Provide inspiration.](#)
- [Make other people feel important and appreciated.](#)
- Live your values. Behave ethically. (Current article - you are here.)
- Set the pace through your expectations and example.
- Establish an environment of continuous improvement.
- Provide opportunities for people to grow, both personally and professionally.
- Care and act with compassion.