



The Leadership Wisdom of Dogs: How to Get a Leg Up at Work

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Leadership is often the biggest differentiator when it comes to success. Without it, organizations can almost never succeed. With it, almost anything is possible.

The leadership traits dogs embody can be boiled down to four themes: the Fido Factor.

Faithful
Inspirational
Determined
Observant

“FIDO”

Faithful leaders earn the trust of their team and their customers by doing the right things and living up to their word.

Inspirational leaders move people to do the meaningful and the extraordinary.

Determined leaders combine perseverance with a dose of fearlessness to keep moving toward goals.

Observant leaders are committed to taking in as much information as possible in order to make the best decisions.

These four dog-inspired traits are crucial to the success of every businessperson who wants to achieve his or her greatest potential.

It's time to unleash your preconceived notions and begin your journey to becoming the best leader you can be.



FAITHFUL

Faithful leaders earn trust & loyalty by doing what they say they're going to do when they say they're going to do it.

They put the good of the team ahead of their personal interests, and that drives bottom-line results.

Attributes of FAITHFUL Leaders

Live Up to Their Commitments

When you say you're going to do something, do it.
Words matter but actions speak louder.

- *How do you show that you put the team's needs ahead of your own?*
- *How do you regularly demonstrate that you will do whatever is necessary to defend your pack?*

Genuinely Care

Don't hide your feelings.
Show compassion to those in need.

- *How can you demonstrate every day that you genuinely care about others?*
- *How can you learn what your team really cares about?*

Intentionally Build Relationships

Build relationships by finding out what makes them tick.
Having a best friend at work = 7X more likely to be fully engaged. (Forbes)
Foster an environment where others build friendships.

- *How well do you really know the people with whom you regularly work?*
- *How can you put in the time and effort to build strong bonds with co-workers?*

Loyalty

Be there when your customers need you. Experience things with them to build bonds so they want to stay with you.
Customers are attracted to humble heroes and authentic experts.

- *What messages do you need to send others to build long-term loyalty?*
- *What can you learn about loyalty from analyzing employee and customer turnover rates?*

Teamwork

Faithful leaders assemble the right teams and manage them with goals, coaching and support.
Clearly define roles & responsibilities. Then pitch in.

- *What specific things do you do to foster teamwork in your workplace?*
- *What do you need to add to facilitate teamwork (e.g. milestones, timetables, defined roles, budgets, reporting formats, face-to-face meetings)?*

Non-Judgmental

Behaviors can be seen, while judgments are inferred. Eliminate judgment words. Words matter. Add "...and by that I mean..." to improve clarity.

- *Are you in the habit of expressing snap judgments, and if so, how can you curtail that?*
- *What words should you eliminate from your work vocabulary?*

Courage

Do what's right, even when no one's watching. Have difficult conversations to address important matters, not avoid them. It takes courage to show vulnerability.

- *When have you shown the courage to stand up against what is wrong or dangerous?*
- *What is a difficult situation you are facing now where you need to take an unpopular position?*

Compliance

Strive for compliance with flexibility. It takes guts to do the right thing—the hard thing—especially when no one is watching. Confront problems and make unpopular decisions.

- *What areas of non-compliance do you need to work on?*
- *What rules or procedures should you eliminate?*

Fetch

Everyone is in "sales." Influence others with your ideas and reinforce yourself as a trusted partner.

- *How can you become more effective at persuading others?*
- *How do you earn the trust of others?*
- *What do you do to get and keep a customer?*

FAITHFUL Leadership Action Items

Which traits related to being a FAITHFUL leader do I need to develop?

My action items to improve in this area are:

INSPIRATIONAL

Inspirational leaders move people to do the meaningful and the extraordinary.

They are future-focused, enthusiastic, optimistic & passionate.

Attributes of INSPIRATIONAL Leaders

Vision

Having a higher purpose compounds motivation and improves results. The vision clarifies where you'll spend your time, talent and resources. Tap into your own (and your team's) "personal why."

- *How do you regularly live & reinforce your vision?*

Attitude Is Everything

Choose to have a positive attitude.
Pivot from the negative to the positive.
Happy says confident. Confident says competent.

- *How do you choose to approach things: from a positive "will do" mindset or an obstacle "that won't work" mindset?*
- *What steps do you need to take to exude a more positive attitude?*

Positive Body Language

Body language is more important than tone of voice or the words we say. Smile, thank, and high-five.

- *How does your body language show your team how happy you are when they succeed?*
- *What recognition practices can you implement to encourage your team to celebrate all successes, big and small?*

Patience

Impatient people are seen as arrogant, insensitive and judgmental. Good leaders are emotionally intelligent. Know what triggers anger and have a go-to response.

- *What triggers your anger?*
- *How can you keep your composure while ensuring your message is delivered in a way that allows everyone to move forward?*

How You Say It

Tone of voice is more important than the words you say. Fight the urge to just bark out orders.

- *Do you frequently bark out orders without getting alignment?*
- *Is how you say what you say consistent with the message you want to convey?*

Innovation

Creativity is the highest rated leadership quality (IBM CEO Study) Embrace change. Get out of your comfort zone. Try new things. Take some risks. Be curious. Ask "what if" and "how else could we" questions.

- *How do you encourage your team to explore opportunities and take calculated risks that could become profitable new avenues for your company?*
- *What new things are you trying?*

Routines

Disciplined habits achieve goals.

Structure helps with time management and incorporates personal goals, too.

- *What regularly scheduled habits should you adopt to be more productive?*
- *How can you add more structure to your workday and workweek so you can focus on the things that matter most?*

Mindfulness

Being mindfully present is the #1 leadership trait. (Bain)

Don't multitask. Concentrate fully on what is in front of you...and on what is most important.

- *How have you encouraged and enabled your team to enjoy the ride when doing business every day?*
- *How often do you multitask and how can you be fully present in interactions?*

Goals

A few meaningful goals are better than lots that get lost.

Make sure they are realistic and measurable.

- *Do you have clear, measurable and attainable goals? What are they?*
- *How do you review and reinforce goals with your team so they always know where they stand and where they're headed?*

Presenting to Groups

This is your opportunity to shine. Prepare and practice.

Know your audience and be yourself.

- *What can you do to improve your ability to persuade when presenting to groups?*
- *What filler words do you say that you need to eliminate?*

Servant Leaders

The leader as follower, supporting the team.

Be ready to play the role of service dog to help others.

- *If you looked through the lens of others, what would you see and how would that change how you lead?*
- *How can you adopt a servant-leader approach to supporting your team?*

INSPIRATIONAL Leadership Action Items

Which traits related to being an INSPIRATIONAL leader do I need to develop?

My action items to improve in this area are:

DETERMINED

Determined leader never give up & keep moving toward their goals.

They focus on what matters most, finish what they start, ask “how else” and figure ways around problems.

Attributes of Determined Leaders

Act with Urgency

Don't let distractions, temptations and obstacles slow you down.

Procrastination is your enemy. Make decisions and move on.

Say “no” or “not now.” focus on what matters most.

- *In what areas can you improve your perseverance?*
- *What can you do to get momentum on your most important projects?*

Accountability & Ownership

Make your word your bond. If you say you'll do it, get it done. You own it.

No excuses.

- *What do you own (or are responsible for) at work?*
- *What can you do to ensure your team knows what outcomes they own?*

Rebound from Setbacks

Don't let negative thoughts hold you back. Learn and move forward.

Trust others' positive intentions. Pivot from what you don't want to what you do want.

- *How much do you think about past setbacks versus focusing on future goals?*
- *How are you steering yourself and others to run towards what you want instead of away from what you don't want?*

Praise, Praise, Praise

Praise reinforces good behaviors.

Builds confidence, pride, happiness and engagement.

- *How and how often do you show others you appreciate them and their contributions?*
- *What affirmations do you say to yourself on a regular basis?*

Overcome Adversity

Bounce back from adversity and accept constructive criticism with grace.

Own up, apologize and fix mistakes promptly.

- *How can you discover what wounds you need to heal?*
- *How do you handle constructive criticism and implement those ideas?*

Embrace Change

Continuous learning is vital to your—and your company's—future. Change is hard for everyone. Discover new ways to make it more fun and stickier.

- *What are you doing to ensure all your employees — both old and new — learn at least two new tricks a year?*
- *In what ways are you personally involved with hands-on training?*

Persuasion

Get results by persuading others. Begin by aligning on what success looks like. Connect with them on a personal level and understand their motivations.

- *How do you align goals with what's really important to the other person?*
- *How often do you stop trying too soon in the process?*

DETERMINED Leadership Action Items

Which traits related to being a DETERMINED leader do I need to develop?

My action items to improve in this area are:

OBSERVANT

Take in as much information as possible in order to make the best decisions.

Observant leaders spot problems & opportunities early, pay attention and sense things others miss.

Attributes of Observant Leaders

Attentive Listeners

You have to actively listen to hear the real meaning.

Process every word, decode clues in inflection, pick up on emotional tone.

Add “Tell me more” and “And then what?” to your conversational vocabulary.

- How can you more actively listen for meaning rather than just for the words?
- How do you show the other person you are actively listening and interested in what they are saying?

Tone of Voice

Body language is the most powerful aspect in communications. Tone of voice is #2.

Make sure your voice conveys confidence and decisiveness.

- *What does your tone of voice say to others?*
- *When you speak do you sound like a leader?*

Ask Great Questions

Instead of focusing on talking, become a great question asker.

“And then what happened?” “Tell me more.” “What do you think?”

- *What is your mix between asking good questions and listening attentively versus talking about yourself and your agenda?*
- *How can you be more intentional about what you and the other person should get out of a conversation?*

Follow Your Nose

When something doesn't smell right, investigate it further.

Intuition and instincts can produce important signals.

- *How can you use your nose to detect opportunities?*
- *How can you try to sniff out potential problems?*

Look For It

Consciously change your perspective to get a fresh look at something.

Don't just see the world in black and white.

- *Are you looking at things in black and white or are you noticing the nuances of full color?*
- *Where should you look for innovative ideas to make your business more efficient or customer friendly?*

Self-Awareness

Know your strengths/weaknesses and how your behaviors affect others.

- *What are your strengths and what areas do you need to improve?*
- *What does your appearance communicate about you as a leader?*

Exercise

When you feel good about yourself you'll be more confident and perform better.

Exercise boosts productivity and improves innovation.

- *What changes should you make in what and how much you eat?*
- *How can you incorporate more exercise into your daily work schedule?*

Communications

85% of company problems can be traced back to a breakdown in communications.

Common communications problems include not recognizing achievements (63%), not giving clear direction (57%) and not having time to meet (52%) (Harvard Business Review)

- *How do you ensure everyone within your organization has the information they need to succeed?*
- *What do you need to do to make the content of your communications more clear, specific and understood by all?*

Managing Others

Use a longer leash for those whose performance has been good and they're doing well now. Use a short leash with newer relationships. Daily check ins help growth, increase confidence.

- *Do you adjust your leash length based on the person's ability to deliver results or do you have a one size fits all approach?*
- *What are you doing on a regular basis that you can stop doing or delegate?*

Bust Through Fences

Go the extra mile to stay connected to remote co-workers.

Don't let internal barriers stymie your ability to build inter-departmental relationships.

Get out and see customers.

- *What new technologies could help you improve productivity and increase collaboration?*
- *How could your business grow with more people out in the field seeing customers and observing market trends?*

OBSERVANT Leadership Action Items

Which traits related to being an OBSERVANT leader do I need to develop?

My action items to improve in this area are:

The Doghouse – Cone of Shame

- What career-limiting behaviors do you need to stop?
- With whom do you need to discuss career-limiting behaviors to help that coworker avoid the doghouse?

Becoming a better leader isn't easy. You'll have to work hard and get your paws dirty. If you're willing to focus on The Fido Factor, you'll get a leg up at work.

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