



# ABOUT BECOMING A LEADER

The need for leadership in all aspects of life is greater than ever before. Every aspect of human life demands a guiding head and hands: business, government, professions, sports, parenthood, and even arts.

Leadership does not mean domination. The world is well supplied with people who aspire to be dictators. True leaders are of a different sort. They seek to inspire people to perform at a higher level than if left alone. One way of looking at leadership is from the perspective of African wisdom:

**"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and why and they will surprise you with their ingenuity." "No man will make a great leader who wants to do it all himself, or to get all the credit for doing it. If you want your people to think don't give instructions, give intent and purpose".**

A glance through history reveals that in significant events, there has always been a bold leader, a sense of purpose, and exceptional achievements.

In philosophy, it is said, "Masses do not accomplish much; they follow the lead of exceptional men and women." In African history, we can reflect upon a few names:

- ***Nelson Mandela fighting apartheid and building the South African rainbow nation.***
- ***A/ine Siteo Diatta when leading an insurrection to resist unfair taxes to his people as a contribution to French colonialism and world war II effort.***
- ***Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba building a spiritual community around faith, work and resistance to colonialism.***
- ***And many more who paid the ultimate price for a cause beyond their own wellbeing.***

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*African traditions and culture offer proverbs that tell the story.*

- ***Much talking does not make you a leader.***
- ***A good leader was once a good follower.***
- ***A leader who does not take advice is not a leader.***
- ***When you are asked to look up, never lose sight of what is on the ground.***
- ***Knowledge without wisdom is like water in the sand.***

A healthy society or business is one in which opportunities are given for leaders to emerge from all corners of the population, regardless of birth, gender, religion, economic power, or education.

There are passive individuals who are content to go through life relying on others. They wait until action is forced upon them; they do not possess leadership qualities but every r need and ry follower needs a leader. What defines a leader is individual craftsmanship, insight, initiative, energy, integrity, and a sense of purpose.



Leaders have standards. They raise the bar by which they judge themselves and the communities they belong to. They vigorously develop their own knowledge and skills to meet and exceed the standards they have set. Leaders carry with them a sense of idealism, a vision of what might be. They act effectively because they have a clear idea of the role they are meant to play and the results they seek.



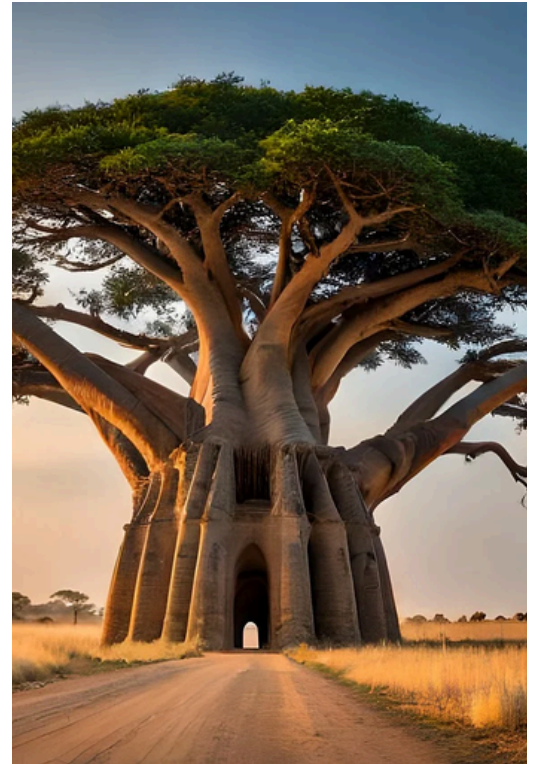
With confidence in themselves, leaders are brave enough to act on probabilities instead of certainties and put their whole energy into making them come true. Leaders submit themselves to stricter discipline than is expected of others. Those who are first in the job must be first in merit

The leaders must be sincere in their beliefs and about their business or project, and they must possess the force of character necessary to inspire others to follow them with confidence. They should surround themselves with diversity ie people of different background, origin or gender who share the same purpose but can-do things the leader cannot do for themselves. ***"God gave us five different fingers to complement each other."***

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The capable leaders do not feel confused when they face a problem because they have developed and learned general procedures that enable them to face a crisis without panicking. They could see situations as a whole as well as in separate points. They demand analysis, not generalization, facts instead of opinions. They sense what is significant and articulate the most complex problems in simple terms, making decisions with incomplete data. They also have a sense of timing in decision-making and execution, not too early, not too late.

In summary, you cannot study leadership with a mechanical yes or no questionnaire. The power of insight that surfaces in a true leader when facing problems, dangers, or conflicts is probably the greatest test for leadership. Like a mountain peak, the leader rises above others and stands apart. The risk of leadership, unless one is very careful, is to become so isolated that they lose a sense of reality, the connection with ordinary people, and the pulse of the nation, organization, or enterprise.



A leader must have the courage and the humility to keep a clear eye on the market and study the organization diligently, especially in times of challenges, learning from pitfalls and rising again, as Mandela puts it, "Do not judge me by my successes. Judge me on how many times I fell down and got back up again."

**As Mandela confided to his biographer :**

***"As individuals, we tend to judge our success by external criteria, such as social position, influence and popularity. Other criteria are perhaps more important in judging a man's and a woman's achievement: honesty, sincerity, simplicity, humility, generosity, absence of vanity, the ability to serve others - qualities within the reach of all souls. This kind of success cannot be achieved without solid introspection and knowledge of one's strengths and weaknesses. Regular meditation can be very helpful. You may find it difficult at first to identify the negative elements in your life, but you'll be rewarded if you make the effort on a regular basis. "***