

# Best Leader / Best Team Member

We were doing a series of DISC Personal Style workshops for a defense contractor that supplies very high-tech components. The primary goal, among others, was to help members of the leadership team, middle management and technical staff understand their personal style strengths and how to flex their styles to better communicate with others, bring the best out of others and how to have a more positive impact on those with whom they work.

In the opening of the personal style sessions for the technical staff we wanted to help everyone understand they did not have to be managers in order to be leaders. To do this, we asked participants in half the class to each take four 3x5 index cards and write the characteristics of the best leader with whom they ever worked, writing one characteristic per card.

We then asked participants in the other half of the class to take four 3x5 index cards and write the characteristics of the best team member with whom they ever worked, again writing one item per card.

We collected all the cards, keeping leader and member decks separate. I passed one deck of cards to my colleague Jim in such a way the participants could not see if I gave him the member deck or the leader deck. Jim and I proceeded to alternately read out loud one card at time. The following is what was written on the Best Member and Best Leader

Best Leader		Best Team Member	
◆ Honest	◆ Enthusiastic	◆ Hard working	◆ Creative
◆ Motivated	◆ Decisive	◆ Relaxed	◆ Pulled weight
◆ Good listener	◆ Open minded	◆ Skilled	◆ Fun
◆ Knowledgeable	◆ Not over bearing	◆ Cooperative	◆ Ethical
◆ Pleasant	◆ Fair	◆ Open minded	◆ Friendly
◆ Competent	◆ Personable	◆ Reliable	◆ Resourceful
◆ Aware	◆ Good communicator	◆ Good attitude	◆ Timely
◆ Positive	◆ Experienced	◆ Shared knowledge	◆ Contributor
◆ Intelligent	◆ Ability to make decisions	◆ Good communicator	◆ Good listener
◆ Helpful	◆ Always there for questions	◆ Knowledgeable	◆ Conscientious
◆ Good teacher	◆ Motivated	◆ Willing to participate	◆ Respectful
◆ Provided challenges	◆ Easy to approach	◆ Took responsibility	◆ Easy to approach
◆ Defended my decisions	◆ Focused on team goals	◆ Helpful	◆ Came forward with opinions
◆ Acknowledged a good job		◆ Motivated	◆ Committed to the goals of the team
		◆ Leads by example	
		◆ Offered pro's and con's of decisions	

## Conclusions

When asked which one of us was reading from the leader deck and which one the member deck, the participants agreed they could not really tell the difference. The list of characteristics made for good team members was essentially the same as those that made for good team leaders.

After some discussion by the class, the following conclusions were reached:

1. You did not need to be a manager to be a leader.
2. There are times when you can find managers who are not regarded as leaders.
3. Leadership is in the eye of the follower. You become the leader when others — bosses, peers and direct reports — see you as the leader.

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4. Leadership is a quality that is open to everyone.
5. Leadership is a role people play, not a position they occupy.
6. People can switch back and forth between being a team member and being a leader during the course of meeting, a day, etc.
7. Leadership is the capacity to influence the behavior and thoughts of others.
8. Influence is gained through one's personal style, expertise, having and willingness to share information others do not have and by having an influential network of people.
9. A leader is any person who has at least one follower, or supporter.

The **most important point** made during the discussion was people who prove to be good team members will also have the capacity to be good leaders. The qualities that make good team members also make for good leaders. This was a good way to open the DISC Personal Style Workshop because the content would cover most all of the attributes on the lists related to having a more positive impact on others and flexing one's style to bring the best out of others.

It is interesting we've spent so much time improving managers and supervisors over the years, which is needed, we overlooked the obvious. The real bench strength of a company is the outstanding technical and support staff. Helping these people relate, communicate and work better with each other has some outstanding benefits. After-all, it is through the actions and interactions of these people that value is created.

Helping managers learn about their personal styles, team work and leadership, but not educating our key technical and support staff in the same subject matter reminds me of my early years working in prison. I took Judo lessons. The only problem was that the inmates did not know Judo and did not know the "Judo Rules" of engagement. So, when the "stuff hit-the-fan", Judo was of little use to me.

Maybe key technical and support staff should know as much about personal style, team work and leadership as their managers!