

In a recent ASCD EDge post, community member and ASCD Emerging Leader Kyle Pace provides readers with five characteristics that "are key to not only being a successful leader.

## Why do we follow? 5 Important Leadership Traits

What makes us latch on to a leader? Why do we follow their ideas, presentations, tweets, and/or conversations? I always enjoy learning about a variety of topics related to educational technology, professional development, and education in general. The last couple years I have had a strong interest in leadership qualities that promote a positive culture and innovation in schools. There are lots and lots of qualities that make a strong educational leader, however, I had 5 come to mind and wanted to share some thoughts about them.

1. **Trusting.** Leaders instill trust in those that work for them. They get things done when they say they're going to. There isn't really a "back burner" to put things on. We trust in our leaders to provide us with the tools, resources, and time to do our jobs to the best of our ability.
2. **Valued.** A leader makes their people feel important and valued; bringing out the best in everyone. As Liz Wiseman calls it in her [book](#), it is The Multiplier Effect. Focusing on extracting the genius and best effort possible from everyone. Not being the only voice at a staff meeting. Seeking out expertise from their own people. Crowdsourcing if you will. Being a genius *maker* rather than just a genius.
3. **Empathetic.** It's always good to show empathy as a leader. Now we all know that leaders sometimes have to make difficult decisions that not everyone agrees with. This is just how it is. Despite not agreeing with your leader's decision, when they show empathy that lets us know they not only understand, but they're not going to leave us stranded without support and resources that are needed even in times of difficult decisions needing to be made.
4. **Encourage risk-taking.** As my friend Adam Bellow puts it, "Innovation is the intersection of fear and bravery." As a leader are you encouraging teachers (and are teachers encouraging students) to take risks? To be brave, bold, and step out of that comfort zone? We all need that type of encouragement. We're in a different time now. Teaching and learning is different. Leadership is different. It should be. In terms of technology and social media I think of it this way: don't deny the existence, invest in the potential.

5. **Growth.** A leader should first and foremost remain a learner. We all should be learners first if we're truly about doing what's best for our students. Encouraging teachers to attend an edcamp, build a PLN, and giving teachers time to learn from each other are essential. It's not a matter of finding the time, it's a matter of making the time; for educational leaders and those that they lead.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. I'm sure many of you can think of additional attributes that are necessary for a leader to exude. In my opinion the five characteristics mentioned above are key to not only being a successful leader, but also empowering those that we lead.

What other leadership traits would you add?

Copyright 2013 ASCD. All Rights Reserved

