

# Leadership That Inspires Others

Pat Gruber, State CEOS Adviser and Family Financial Management  
Zona Hutson, Extension Agent, Doddridge County

## Educational Objectives

1. To understand the traits associated with leadership and the ability to inspire others.
2. Understand practices that will engage individuals and build commitment.

*“Leadership is based on a spiritual quality; the power to inspire, the power to inspire others to follow.”*  
– Vince Lombardi

The word inspire is a leadership trait that is difficult to define or measure. However, this trait is easily recognized when someone creates a feeling or motivates a person to do something positive.

How does one inspire and motivate others to achieve greatness? Inspirational leadership is the ability to uplift and inspire people to perform at their best. A study completed by Zenger, Folkman and Edinger (2009) found that leaders who know how to inspire others have higher levels of commitment, retention and satisfaction with others. Inspiration gives leadership its energy.



### Activity:

In groups of two or three, share who has inspired you. List the qualities or traits that inspire you.

## Traits of an Inspirational Leader

### Good Communicator

Inspirational leaders live by the organization’s vision and mission. They are able to communicate the organization’s purpose to others. Inspiring leaders spread excitement and enthusiasm throughout the organization. People like to know that their organization is making a positive difference and contributing to a greater good.

The letters in the word “listen” are also the same letters that spell “silent.” An inspiring leader recognizes the need to be silent and hears with the intent to understand. Active listening encourages

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others to share their thoughts, ideas and objectives. People need to see their ideas being incorporated or understand why they were not being used.

## Integrity

*“Integrity is not a 90 percent thing, not a 95 percent thing; either you have it or you don’t.”* – Peter Scotese

The root of leadership is that you must constantly consider how your decisions will influence other people. Integrity is critical in leading others. People will follow and be motivated by leaders who they can trust and depend on to make good decisions, do the right thing and serve as a role model. An inspirational leader has a strong set of values that consistently demonstrate honesty, openness and true respect for others. The ability to talk openly, honestly and with the trust that ideas will be respected, encourages commitment and loyalty from those you are leading. Leaders are watched. The way a leader reacts, works and the words they use convey how a leader leads and if they are trusted.

## Caring

Inspirational leaders recognize, praise, reward and provide the simple thank you that validates an individual’s contribution. Recognition is a critical component of inspiration. By caring, a leader is mindful of what others are experiencing and regularly lets others know they are appreciated and valued.

Inspiring leaders care enough to help or teach others by encouraging the growth and development of an individual’s strengths and skills. They serve as peacemakers and express genuine gratitude. Through their actions, these leaders consistently show others that they are concerned about the individual, the group and/ or the situation.

## Positive Attitude

Great leaders inspire others, because they are inspired themselves. They are enthusiastic and optimistic about the possibility of creating

an exciting future. Their enthusiasm is contagious. Inspirational leaders create an atmosphere and set a tone that encourages hard work but recognizes and respects having fun in the process.

*“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”* – John Quincy Adams

## Consistent Practices of Inspirational Leaders

Because recognition and appreciation are important to each one of us, always strive to make others feel appreciated, important and valued.

- Leaders can use their influence to achieve extraordinary results from ordinary people, not by lighting a fire beneath them but by building a fire within them.
- Praise others on the spot; the sooner you praise them after the event, the more meaningful it is to them.
- Acknowledge them publicly for others to see. This brings a feeling that what they have accomplished is significant and something to be recognized as important and meaningful.
- Find creative ways to reward accomplishments and hard work. Unexpected rewards are appreciated.
- An inspiring leader understands that well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise and encouragement have significant positive impacts for others.
- Appreciation expressed and work that is recognized can kindle a fire in others for the common good of all.



*Activity:*

Break into small groups of three or four. Ask each participant to share a time or situation when they received recognition that they appreciated and enjoyed.

## Communicate

*“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”*

– George Bernard Shaw

Communicate, communicate, communicate... and then send another note or message.

- Share the organization’s current and upcoming projects. Share success stories and good news.
- Keep in mind that members want to know what is happening and what is new and working for others.
- Inspiring leaders connect with members personally.
- Inspiring leaders look for opportunities to say good things or talk about how they could do something in a different way.
- Caring leaders know that there are three responses members can receive from leadership concerning their work: positive, negative or no response at all. Only one will satisfy the individual: the positive response. It will keep the fire burning and most likely increase involvement in the program.
- Communicate to others that you see their efforts and the positive outcomes. They will know that you care, appreciate and give value to their work.
- Communicate and share your good thoughts.
- Communicate the value of the educational, leadership and service opportunities.

## Handle Conflict

An inspiring leader always works to lead with honesty, fairness and integrity towards

everyone in the group, and they expect the same from the members.

Differences in opinion and conflict are expected to occur in any group. Remind members to focus on the big picture and not to allow small conflicts to hinder the total group. Recognize that there are various points of view and different personality traits. Find ways to hear and value all points of view. Suppressing disagreement discourages new ideas and deprives the group of needed energy.

Conflict can be valuable to a group. It can stimulate new thought, lead to creative

solutions and build new interest in the group. When conflict arises, work to keep your emotions in check and be fair and impartial. Follow the group or organization’s policies and by-laws. You can set a time limit for discussion or defer the decision to a committee. Look to leadership above you for guidance. Use “I” statements rather than “you” statements. When there is a vote to be taken, vote individually on paper. If the votes are counted, have more than one person doing the tabulation.

If there has been any disagreements, be certain to select the two or three vote counters from opposite view points. If the discussion gets out of hand, call for a 10-minute break, then resume the discussion after giving guidelines for process, kindness, listening and time limits.

Another way to handle a discussion that is not moving along is to assign a committee to work on it and bring back suggestions for the next meeting. Be certain that all sides are represented on a committee.

*Activity:*

Share the following quotes with the group and discuss (quotes could be given to participants in the group to read aloud to the group for discussion).

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*The rule of three is –  
we must hear and/  
or see something  
three times before we  
really remember it.  
Tell them, tell them  
again, and then  
remind them.*

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Copy and cut apart to distribute.

*“A leader leads by example,  
whether he intends to or not.”*

– *Author Unknown*

*“If your actions inspire others  
to dream more, learn more,  
do more and become more,  
you are a leader.”*

– *John Quincy Adams*

*“Leadership is practiced  
not so much in words as in  
attitude and in actions.”*

– *Harold S. Geneen*

*“Good leaders must become  
what they want their followers  
to become.”*

– *Nido R. Qubein*

*“True leadership must be  
for the benefit of the followers,  
not the enrichment  
of the leaders.”*

– *Robert Townsend*

## Resources

4-H Leaders Training Series, Enriching the Club Experience. Rutgers University Extension. Revised by Macy Compton and Laura Bovitz. Written by TC Buchanan.

Heathfield, S.M. (n.d.). Inspiring Leadership Characteristics. Retrieved from About.com: [http://humanresources.about.com/od/leadership/a/leader\\_inspire.htm](http://humanresources.about.com/od/leadership/a/leader_inspire.htm).

How to Motivate People in Volunteer Groups. University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Service.

Managing Conflict, Activity Plan, Wisconsin 4-H Leader Training Series, University of Wisconsin.

Zenger, J.H., Folkman, J.R., and Edinger, S.K. (2009). *The Inspiring Leader*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Company.

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