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An Examination of Leadership

Leadership is the key to America's success. As a country, we know when we are being led well or led poorly, but our criteria for determining why that is the case is not always obvious. By looking at what makes a leader great, we can become more informed when selecting political representatives while also looking at how to improve our own leadership qualities, enabling all of us to become agents of positive change.

Leaders inspire. Others will be motivated, uplifted, and energized by the leader's clear communication of his vision and his achievable goals. Leaders invite others to achieve those goals, and others want to be a part of the result. Leaders act like teammates, not seeing others as their subordinates, but rather as a part of the whole which will achieve desired results.

Leaders believe. A strong leader is fully confident of his vision, and stays on the path towards it. He models persistence, focusing always on the solution rather than on the inevitable problems which emerge along the way. He is resilient, knowing that setbacks are a part of any long-term plan, but is optimistic that the result can be achieved.

Leaders listen and learn. A strong leader knows he does not have all the answers, and builds strong teams with those who complement his acknowledged deficiencies. He is open to the team's input, forming positive relationships that are mutually beneficial. He is not arrogant or closed-minded, and welcomes expertise rather than feels threatened by it.

Leaders share. The best leaders are mentors to the next generation, sharing their acumen instead of hoarding it selfishly. Leaders know that life is a relay race, and understand the importance of passing the baton. A strong leader is a strong mentor.

Leaders are compassionate and respectful. They acknowledge diversity, embrace it, and incorporate their vision to do the greatest good for the greatest number after a careful analysis of the consequences for all involved. Great leaders acknowledge each team member's importance, give credit where it is due, and are grateful for contributions towards achieving a common goal; they realize when their skill sets are insufficient, delegate when necessary, but do not delegate simply to avoid work. Leaders do not seek to be liked; rather, they seek to do what is right, even though it may not be easy or popular.

Leaders are disciplined. They manage others, but more importantly, they manage themselves, with honesty and focus. Strong leaders are responsible, seek constant self-improvement, and are highly ethical. Others who follow them strive to be the same. Leaders think before speaking, and consider before acting.

The very best leaders improve the quality of life for those around them in some way. The improvements can range from the development and implementation of new policies to the design

and manufacture of new products or processes, but leaders share the common traits of being able to inspire, to communicate a clear vision, to listen, to share, and to work within a respectful and ethical framework. We should all aspire to be leaders in some capacity within our lives, and the world will be better for it.