

## Leadership should start with C

Captain, colonel, chaplain, commander and chief, cardinal, chief executive officer, chairman of the board, counselor, coach, chief financial officer

There are so many leadership titles that start with the letter C that leadership should start with C. Fortunately you don't need a C title to be a leader, but you do need the four Cs of leadership. These Cs are community, commitment, consistency, and clarity.

True leaders are community centered. They know their team, not only their names but their likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, their family situation and their hobbies. This vital knowledge separates great leaders from the crowd. A great leader uses the team to cover for teammate's weaknesses and uses teammate's strengths to help the team. A great leader knows there is nothing more important to a team than relationships. The anonymous worker bee is a thing of the past as generation Y and X teammates become a higher percentage of the workforce. With the explosion of electronic communication available to teams and leaders, there are no more excuses for a lack of communication, explanation, and relationships, within and throughout your team.

My favorite leader starts with C, Christ Jesus. Isn't it amazing that God, the supreme leader, decided to come to earth as a dependent child and to live his life humbly, teaching through relationships, rather than coming in like a Greek god on a flying golden chariot with lightning bolts strapped to his back? That's because dominance isn't leadership. True leadership demands that the leader puts himself in a position to serve his teammates and the team. The team's success is his top priority. He is number two. Executive bathrooms, parking spots, lunchrooms, and the like undermine the community component of leadership. When I became a leader for the Denver Broncos wasn't when I was selected to be a captain. I became a leader when I decided to get to know all of my teammates better by sitting at a different lunch table every day.

A leader's absolute commitment to the team's mission over her own short term interest is vital. A leader thinks we instead of me. Every person in a position of power has to make tough decisions from time to time. This is the hardest part of being in a position of power. The football coach who cuts a veteran teammate and friend when it's best for the team is a leader. The parents who send away the rebellious teenager they love, to remove his influence on the other children in the home are leaders. Being a leader is not easy. My wife's commitment to staying home for our children, rather than using her many gifts in the working world, is a sacrificial act of leadership on her part. She is a brilliant woman who has made a conscious decision to put our team's needs, our families' needs, before her own. Mom should start with C too.

The combination of being community centered and committed to your teams' goals will make you an effective leader as long as that commitment is consistent and clear. Change scares many people but if change is what the team needs then a leader must call for it. As my old coach Dan Reeves was fond of saying in his southern drawl, "You're either gettin better or gettin worse, you cain't stay the same".

When problems become apparent making no decision, hoping the problem will go away, will undermine your position as a leader. If you are not consistent you will quickly lose your followers. Followers will question a leader's decisions, but if they see that the leader is consistently trying to do what's best for the team they will continue to follow. It takes time to build a reputation of consistency in followers' minds. Consistency in making those tough decisions, for the good of the team, repeatedly over time, is the mark of a great leader and essential to motivating the team to buy in to the team mission.

Clarity of motive and commitment is best demonstrated in consistent actions that backup consistent communication. Be proactive, informing teammates of decisions, minimizing rumors and confusion. Communication must be a two way street for the community to thrive. Opportunities for input in decision making across a team brings ownership and accountability to team members. These input opportunities strengthen a team by allowing team members to demonstrate their strengths and helping to prepare future team leaders.

Community, commitment, consistency, and clarity are four vital components of leadership that every leader needs to be aware of. Leadership should start with C.

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