

The essence of leadership

Lead by example and delegate to get your team to buy in

What are the qualities of a great leadership?

Martini: There are many different qualities which great leaders must possess. First, they should have a strong intellect and work ethic and must be fully committed to and knowledgeable about the organization they lead.

They must also be selfless and self-confident, but not arrogant. They need to consistently do what is in the best interest of those they lead, rather than acting in their own self-interest. It is critically important that leaders be strong, nimble and resilient so they can adapt to quickly changing circumstances.

A healthy dose of humility is always a huge plus. Finally, a great leader is not only inspired but also inspires others.

Susler: Great leaders are good listeners, positive role models, passionate about what they do and possess a can-do attitude. They are effective delegators and also willing to get their hands dirty. No task is too small or too trivial — if it needs to be done, they will do it.

They lead by example, not by command, and treat everyone equally and fairly. They also have a vision of where they want their organization to go and enroll others into willingly implementing it.

How do you develop leadership skills most effectively?

Martini: You learn how to be an effective leader by doing it. When I took on my first significant leadership position at the firm about 10 years ago as the Chicago office hiring partner, I found that no matter how much advice I had received from my predecessor or from my team, there was no substitute for being in the trenches and feeling my way through the role. I had to figure it out for myself and develop my own leadership style.

It is also invaluable to watch other leaders in action and analyze what they do, when they do it and how they do it. You should both watch them from the distance and speak with them one-on-one and seek their mentoring and guidance. It is also helpful to read books and articles on leadership and to participate in programs and conferences on the subject. I recommend making every effort to incorporate learning about leadership into your day-to-day life.

Susler: Watch, listen and learn. Take the time to learn, practice and develop your leadership skills. Listening, for example, is often a learned



Inside Out

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Watch them talk more about this topic with the Better Government Association's Andy Shaw at chicagolawyer magazine.com. To submit a question for future columns, e-mail questions.insideout@gmail.com.

Great leadership is about getting others excited about a mission or cause and inspiring them to willingly act in a particular way, rather than just telling them what to do. Leadership is not dictatorship.

When strong leaders disagree, they do so tactfully and steer in a different direction; and they are not dismissive or belittling. They are passionate about what they do and about their organization's mission and vision.

I agree that taking on different types of leadership roles is important in developing your leadership skills. Great leaders also recognize that they can and must continue to learn, develop and grow, and they are always striving to succeed and recognize they can consistently improve, never resting on their laurels. ■

skill more than a natural one, especially for lawyers.

Identify those whom you admire and discern the qualities that make them good leaders, what is effective and what fails, then practice by modeling such behavior.

As Tina said, the best way to develop leadership skills is by taking on different leadership roles. This is a process that starts at the beginning

of your career and continues throughout.

You can start small by taking the lead on discrete tasks or on project teams or by taking on committee leadership roles.

If the opportunity does not present itself at work, join a nonprofit board or volunteer somewhere and take on leadership roles there; maybe you start as the chair of a fundraising project or a committee, then work up to an officer. Leadership skills are transferable between for-profit and not-for-profit organizations.

What are some of the most valuable lessons you have learned about leadership?

Martini: It takes a great deal of hard work to become a strong leader, and it is a continuous process — the learning never ends.

It is important to wear multiple leadership hats, both internally and externally, to develop a well-rounded leadership skill set. You must understand the people you lead and what motivates and inspires them so that you can be more effective.

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Susler: Being a good listener and effective delegator are of critical importance, and both take practice. Effective leaders allow others to speak their minds to articulate their ideas and opinions.

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