

# WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

Leadership is a trait that effects just about every creature on the planet – from alphas in a wolf pack or gorilla troop, to kids on a playground, workers in a factory or executives in a boardroom. Whether you're a leader or a follower, the role of leadership touches you and influences your potential, the environment in which you operate and your outcomes. It's vitally important to your group's success or failure.





# UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP

## But, what is leadership?

Scholars, businesses and behaviorists have studied leadership for centuries. Over time, theories and definitions have changed to reflect changing realities in society, technology and the types of work we do. However, regardless of the changes to leadership theories and activities, one thing remained the same, leaders continued to lead – because that’s what leaders do.

Leadership definitions have gone down many paths. Business leaders have looked at it from a business point of view. For example, Otis Elevator CEO Judy Marks sees leadership as the ability to drive results – from sharing the vision to creating the environment that enables success. Verizon CEO Vestberg sees leadership as ensuring people have what they need to meet an organization’s goals. KMPG Global Chairman Bill Thomas describes it as setting a vision, building a team capable of delivering on the vision and making it digestible and actionable to all levels through plans that are personal and relevant to them. What all three of these leaders’ definitions have in common is a focus on goals as a vital leadership trait.

Researchers and behaviorists take a more tactile approach to describing leadership. They talk of leadership as ways to inspire, motivate, influence and direct people – from individuals to teams to entire enterprises. There are different means by which they achieve that motivation. It may be how they communicate and support. It may be setting direction, providing resources and enabling achievement.

Each of those views of leadership has merit, and none appears to be the answer that trumps all others. In reality, the ideal definition of leadership could combine aspects of many theories. Through the various definitions of leadership, the common themes are the ability to move followers through a common purpose or mission to accomplish an organizational or personal goal.

## SO IN THE END WE CAN SAY:

*“Leadership is creating and communicating a compelling vision that aligns with strategic objectives and empowers others to achieve more than they thought possible for their teams, themselves and society.”*

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