

Introduction

Leaders with character tend to be more successful. Why is that? We tend to trust people who are trustworthy, who exhibit traits we want to model, and who have an interest in topics beyond basic financial results. We are drawn to people who are honest, have integrity, and won't make any compromises. On the flip side of that, we won't follow someone who is corrupt for long. We see right through the sham.

To help you figure out whether a leader has moral character, or to test yourself and see if you have what it takes to lead, listen for these key phrases.

Credit: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/10-phrases-leaders-high-moral-character-always-use-kyle-wall>

Phrases 1-5

1. "Because I said I would ..."

This is an important phrase. When a leader makes a promise and then follows through on the promise, it's a sign of good character. It means he or she is not just making empty-headed comments with no intention of doing anything about the issue.

2. "Let me get back to you on that ..."

Leaders with character don't give you cheap answers. If they don't know the right response, a good leader will look into the issue and spend the time tracking down the right solution. It's all about the pursuit of excellence and truth, not just salivating the underlings.

3. "There's a reason for that ..."

Having character as a leader means explaining the reasons. Why is that? Because character is always about a pursuit of truth. There isn't always a perfectly clear answer (that's why the pursuit of truth is a journey and not always a resting place) but there are reasons. Explaining them is a sign of character.

4. "I don't understand ..."

Similar to the pursuit of truth, good leaders also pursue understanding. Someone without good moral character might just pretend to understand as a way to move on. There's a curiosity to good leadership, and having character that says, "I want to understand the right answer ... always."

5. "Yes ..."

Leaders with a moral center tend to give you a yes or no answer. They don't quibble or delay beyond what's reasonable. When there is a decision to be made and they have done their research, they don't say "maybe" and leave you hanging.

Leadership

A leader is a dealer in hope. —Napoleon Bonaparte

Phrases 6-10

6. "Let me explain ..."

Part of the pursuit of truth in leadership is a desire to explain complex subjects. There has to be an interest in the welfare of others and not just a personal agenda. When you explain and educate, you show you want to do more than just dictate.

7. "There is no easy answer ..."

Being able to admit when you don't have all of the answers is a sign of character. People without character pretend to have the solution, but eventually we figure out that it's a ruse. Lack of character and pretending go hand in hand.

8. "That's a great idea ..."

Honest leaders won't ever steal an idea and make it their own. They recognize when someone on the team comes up with something worthwhile and gives due credit.

9. "I will follow up with you ..."

Follow-up is key. It shows you will look for the answer, but it also shows you care about the person enough and will take the time to find a solution. People without character don't care. They let things trail off without reaching a resolution.

10. "I'm sorry ..."

Great leaders know how to apologize. It is part of their DNA. If they make a mistake, instead of pretending it's not a big deal or casting blame, they own up to the mistake.