

Characteristics of an Effective Leader

It is an honor to be elected as an officer of your organization. An officer must not only possess superior organizational, communication, and managerial skills, s/he must assume great responsibility and provide consistent, inspired and *principle-centered leadership* for other group members.

Most importantly, s/he must possess the ability to lead by example, in attempts to gain the respect and confidence of his/her fellow group members. Self-discipline will enable you to hold others accountable for their actions. After all, if you as a leader do not pay your bills, come prepared to meetings, and act responsibly in a social atmosphere, why should the members?

Other traits of an exceptional leader include:

Proactive vs. Reactive - The exceptional leader is always thinking three steps ahead and works to master his/her environment with the goal of avoiding problems before they arise.

Flexible/Adaptable - How one handles oneself in unexpected or uncomfortable situations... an effective leader will adapt to new surroundings and situations, doing his/her best to adjust.

A Good Communicator - As a leader, one must listen...a lot! He/she must be willing to work to understand the needs and desires of the membership. A good leader asks many questions, considers all options, and leads the organization in the right direction.

Respectful - An officer should show respect to those who elected him/her to the position. Showing others respect will ultimately bring respect.

Confident - Be proud of the organization and let the pride emanate to others within and outside of the group.

Enthusiastic - Excitement is contagious. When a leader is motivated and excited about the organization, the group will follow his/her lead.

Open-Minded - Work to consider all options when making decisions. A strong leader will evaluate input/constructive criticism from all stakeholders and work for the betterment of the organization as a whole.

Resourceful - As a leader you must utilize the resources available to you and the organization. Your advisors, the staff in the Campus Life Office, and other members of the Knox community are all here to help you. Use them!

Rewarding - An exceptional leader will recognize the efforts of other officers/members and positively reinforce those actions. We all enjoy being recognized for our actions!

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Well Educated - Knowledge is power. Work to be the officer who is well educated on the organization, the Campus Life Office, campus, and community policies and procedures. Further, your knowledge of issues and information within the organization will only increase your success in leading the group.

Open to Change - A leader will take into account all points of view and will be willing to change a policy, program, or tradition that is out-dated, or no longer beneficial to the organization as a whole.

Interested in Feedback - How do your members feel about your performance as a leader? How can you serve the members of the organization better? These are important questions that a leader needs to constantly ask. It is important not to get defensive if someone offers you feedback, but rather to work to understand and work to better meet his/her needs.

Evaluative - Evaluation of events and programs is essential for an organization to improve and progress. An exceptional officer will constantly evaluate and change programs and policies that are not working.

Organized - Are you prepared for meetings events and confident that other officers are prepared and organized as well?

Consistent - As an officer, you need the confidence and respect of the organization members. Confidence and respect cannot be attained without your leadership being consistent. Members must have confidence that their opinions and thoughts will be heard and taken into consideration.

Delegator - An exceptional leader realizes that he cannot accomplish everything on his own. He will know the talents and interests of his members, thus delegating tasks accordingly. Be sure to be inclusive of all members.

This is one of the many handouts available to you. Feel free to meet with Jil Gates, in Campus Life for more details about this topic or any others related to leadership or your student organization.

We also have open advising hours Thursdays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. The Office of Student Activities is located in the Seymour Union, on the 1st floor. You can also ask questions by telephone at 309-341-7573 or email at jgates@knox.edu.

This document was adapted from the Office of Student Activities, Willamette University.

Updated 6/11