

Shaping Directions: Inside Out Leadership

'Inside-out' Leadership is one of the most talked about yet least understood concepts. Unlike traditional leadership assessment criterion, where characteristics are deemed to be either learnt behaviour or acquired skills, the PIB approach holds that in fact ALL LEADERSHIP IS INHERENT. While many people closely identify with and understand this concept, an equal number are puzzled by it, perhaps sensing unknown territory: the antithesis of traditional, evidence-based programs...

INSIDE-OUT LEADERSHIP is characterised by a belief that leadership development is an on-going, life-long learning process. For this reason, Inside-out leaders commit to continual development. As students of this approach they seek to understand and deploy eleven characteristics, some of which come more naturally than others.

For example, by their nature, characteristics such as calling, empathy, healing, and stewardship are more difficult to learn and develop than others. These are characteristics that leaders need to be well resourced in to be successful inside-out leaders. Characteristics such as listening, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, growth, and building community are all learnable skills, so inside-out leaders can continually develop these.

We encourage you to reflect and thoughtfully assess the degree to which you have what it takes to be an INSIDE-OUT leader. If you are committed to being the best leader that you can be, it will take continuous self-awareness to develop these characteristics.

Inside Out Leadership: Characteristics Defined

1. CALLING - Do people believe you are willing to sacrifice self-interest for the good of the group?

Inside-out leaders have a natural desire to serve others. Some regard it as a calling, and it is deeply rooted and value-based. Inside-out leaders have a desire to make a difference for other people and will pursue opportunities to impact others' lives - never for their own gain. He or she is willing to sacrifice self-interest for the sake of others in the pursuit of the company goals. This characteristic is not taught, but brought about by a deeply felt respect for all life.

2. LISTENING - Do people believe that you want to hear their ideas, and will value them?

Inside-out leaders are excellent listeners. They are open, and genuinely interested in the views of others – curious to see something new. People instinctively understand that inside-out leaders want them to share their ideas and that these ideas will be valued. Listening well is the suspension of all our opinions; all that we think we know.

3. EMPATHY - Do people believe that you will understand what is happening in their lives and how it affects them?

Inside-out leaders can walk in others' shoes - compassion in action. They understand and appreciate how circumstances and problems affect people's lives. Inside-out Leaders accept what is and intimately understand that 'there but for the grace of God go I.' They thereby provide confidence and trust for others as they find their own inner commonsense.

4. HEALING - Do people come to you when the chips are down or when something traumatic has happened in their lives?

Inside-out leaders are people who others want to approach when something traumatic has happened. They have an innate appreciation for the emotional and spiritual health of others. They create the environment for healing, through gratitude for life in all its guises.

5. AWARENESS - Do others believe you have a strong awareness for what is going on?

Inside-out leaders have a keen sense for what is happening around them. They are naturally attuned to the environmental cues which inform their decisions. They know what's going on and will respond from a deeply aware consciousness.

6. PERSUASION - Do others follow your requests because they want to - or because they believe they have to?

Inside-out leaders influence people and events positively rather than control. They see compelling reasons to act for the common good and inspire others to do the same. They see manipulation, coercion and manoeuvring as working against themselves and others.

7. CONCEPTUALISING - Do others communicate their ideas and vision for the organisation when you are around?

Inside-out leaders nurture the ability to conceptualise the world, events, and possibilities. They encourage others to dream great dreams and avoid getting bogged down by day-to-day realities or fear of the not yet known. They foster insight, and the resultant creative process.

8. FORESIGHT - Do others have confidence in your ability to anticipate the future and its consequences?

Inside-out leaders have the ability to anticipate future events without trying to control them. They are not always right, and they do not seek to be, but they are adept at picking up patterns in the environment and seeing the possibilities.

9. STEWARDSHIP - Do others believe you are preparing the organisation to make a positive difference in the world?

Inside-out leaders are often characterised by a strong sense of stewardship. Stewardship stems from medieval times when a 'steward' would be assigned to hone the skills and development of the young prince - to prepare him for his reign. The kingdom relied on the steward to teach and hold the prince in trust so that he would be a successful king. Today the term stewardship involves many of the same things. A steward in an organisation is responsible for preparing it for its destiny, usually for the betterment of society. When we describe a leader as having a strong sense of stewardship, we refer to a desire to prepare the organisation to contribute to the greater good of society, while making a profitable business - not unlike preparing the prince to serve the greater good of the kingdom. Making a positive difference in the future is characteristic of the stewardship mentality. Those who desire to be excellent inside-out leaders need to have a natural sense of stewardship. If you don't naturally have a stewardship perspective, it is unlikely that the inside-out leadership style will come naturally to you.

10. GROWTH - Do people believe that you are committed to helping them develop and grow?

Inside-out leaders have a strong commitment to the growth of people. They believe that all people have something to offer beyond their tangible contributions. Inside-out leaders keep an eye on people's whole self - spiritually, professionally, personally. Those who want to be great inside-out leaders need to connect to others' developmental needs and actively find ways to meet these needs.

11. BUILDING COMMUNITY - Do people feel a strong sense of community in the organisation that you lead?

Inside-out leaders have a strong sense of community and work hard to foster it in an organisation. They believe that an organisation needs to function as a community, and play an integral role within the wider community. Therefore, a sense of community spirit is instilled in the workplace because great inside-out leaders see the critical nature of the spirit of community in their organisation.

Consider, Reflect, Discover...

Self awareness, at a deeper level, is our ability to intuitively understand 'that we think' and that our thinking determines our personal reality at every moment.

As the Inside-out leader builds a company or organisation, all the above eleven characteristics reveal themselves to be STATES of MIND. These states of mind are a natural consequence of self-aware or conscious people. Self-awareness, at a deeper level, is our ability to intuitively understand that we think and that our thinking determines our personal reality at every moment.

And this self-awareness of our own personal reality is an inner acknowledgement of the power of THOUGHT.

THOUGHT is central to your experience, your personal reality; never doubt it. It is creative, destructive - and all things between. The Inside-out leader has an unflinching, natural willingness to see that centrality. And as life unfolds, Consciousness and Self-awareness are the inner characteristics that distinguish everything they do. ■ ■