

Proving Leadership

Elmer G. Letterman was a successful insurance broker and author of several books on sales techniques. Many astute quotes are attributed to him, one of which is “Personality can open doors, but only character can keep them open.” This kernel of truth is applicable in many of life’s relationships — romance and friendship come to mind.

We all know someone who has personality plus. If that personality is shallow and opportunistic, success — enduring, resourceful and considerable — is not likely. However, if the personality is further augmented by good character, then we may have the makings of a leader. In the working world, character is undeniably essential for enduring and considerable success.

A key trait that most companies are looking for these days is leadership. But many job hunters find leadership difficult to articulate, especially on a resume or in an interview. Proving leadership is a must if you wish to stand out from the job-hunting crowd, or if you are stepping up the career ladder.

► **Prove that You Have Influenced or Inspired**

- Have you participated in, or led a group effort to further a corporate goal? Did you provide ideas, energy or enthusiasm to this project? How did this play out?
- Have you displayed mutual respect for others? Do you have a quote from a colleague thanking you for standing up for a cause, entrusting her with a project or role, or for bringing in a new policy that was more inclusive or addressed an inequity?

► **Prove that You Are Forward-Thinking, Creative, Intellectual**

- Have you participated in, or led, a brainstorming group that generated solutions? To what end?
- Have you played “devil’s advocate,” or questioned the eventualities of a plan? Did your insight save the company from loss, or a project from failure?
- Do you ask for other points of view, and encourage unsolicited input?
- Do you continue to learn, either from formal studies or intense self-study?

► **Prove that You Develop Human Capital**

- Are you affirmative and encouraging, mentor others, and trust your colleagues?
- Do you delegate to ensure that milestones and outcomes are met?
- Have you continued your own self-development, modeling behaviour for others?
- Do you build chemistry in your group?

► **Prove that You Recognize Each Person’s Importance and Worthiness**

- Do you get to know your staff and colleagues — particularly in a work-related capacity?
- Do you make sure you recognize people for their efforts and work?
- Are you trustworthy, ethical, honest, empathetic and reasonable?
- Are you willing to admit that you don’t know something, and then follow through with a researched answer?

These are some of the ways that leadership is assessed and recognized. If you need more information on leadership consider reading a few biographies of well-respected leaders, conduct business leadership research, or source out leadership training.