

The Many Definitions Of Leadership by Josée Larocque Patton, Forbes Councils Member.

When I was a child, I believed that leaders were special, sparse and existed only in certain circumstances. I am not quite sure how or why I got that impression, yet it is something that fueled me to believe that being a leader was an honorable thing and it was what I wanted to be when I grew up. As early as I can remember, I have been a very independent, strong person who wants to help others. Friends and people I did not know came to me for help, and I figured out whatever that person needed and did it. It could be something as simple as school work, how to do a backflip with a soccer ball or standing up for someone who was being bullied.

As I grew older, the same things happened to me. In my late teens, I started to pay more attention to the definitions of a leader. I sought out descriptions and articles, and when I got jobs, I wanted to know what performance metrics made a good leader. You could call it a mission of mine.

In my early 20s, I ended up in a job that I was not quite expecting, and it became my role to hire, train, stand up for and even fire people. This is when I had the epiphany that leadership traits boil down to the basic skills we all have. I never considered myself special — just a regular girl next door — yet I was helping people, leading them in the right direction, getting them back on track when something went wrong. At the age of 22, I finally considered myself a leader and knew I wanted more of it.

As an employee and now a business owner, I still want a definition of what actually makes a good leader. Yet, when talking to people, we all seem to have our own points of view on this. What I realized is that we do not necessarily spend enough time on defining leadership; instead, we make assumptions about what good and bad leadership is. Of course, everyone has an opinion about what bad leadership is due to personal experiences, yet do organizations truly have definitions of what being a leader means for their business?

Over the past 6 months, we have been exposed to clearer definitions of what being a leader is. Some people have stepped up to the plate very well, and on the flip side, it has exposed others who may not be cut out for their role.

Instead of solely providing you my perspective of what leadership is, I turned to my LinkedIn family for their insights as well. Here are some of their responses:

- A leader is someone to look up to, who will guide, help, listen and teach you and who will be there in difficult and good times while not being scared of learning from anyone as well.
- Leadership is directly tied to how you are perceived by others.
- A leader is not defined by the title you hold in a company but how you inspire and motivate those around you.
- Leadership is not about a title, it's about how you make your team feel. Do they work for you because they have to, or do they work for you because they want to?
- A "good" leader is someone who guides, not orders, and respects, not dictates. It's someone who recognizes that being the leader doesn't make them the best or smartest in the room.
- Leadership is a set of individual and conscious choices we make to uplift and support an inclusive pursuit of a vision.
- Leadership should make a safe, motivational environment so that team members can achieve goals and make mistakes that they can learn from.
- A leader will lead people to places they would not go on their own.

Can you see the trend — the same trend that I realized in my epiphany when I was 22? Leaders are servants to others and that means we don't need one specific definition of what a leader is. We are all leaders in our own way. Anyone can be a role model, anyone can help people achieve a goal and anyone can set someone else up for success. When someone is a leader, it's not about their words, it's their actions that make them leaders.

Now in my 40s, I still love being a leader. I strive to do what I can within my capacity to serve others. If you, too, want to be a true leader, the most important thing to realize is that you hold a responsibility to others. It's about guiding people in the right direction, inspiring people and, most importantly, understanding that anyone can be a leader with or without a title.

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2020/10/12/the-many-definitions-of-leadership/>