

Leadership Fitness Test

Natural leadership qualities are important. Too often these skills lie dormant and undiscovered. If we look carefully, we should be able to detect not only our leadership potential but also our current level of leadership fitness.

Here are some ways to investigate your potential (Adapted from J. Oswald Sanders *Spiritual Leadership*). Think of each of these Fitness Stations as a fitness circuit designed to train various aspects of your body similar to the popular “*CrossFit*” program.

Fitness Station #1:

- Have you ever broken a bad habit? To lead others, you must master your appetites.
- Do you keep self-control when things go wrong? The leader who loses control under adversity forfeits respect and influence. A leader must be calm in crisis and resilient in disappointment.

Fitness Station #2:

- Do you think independently? A leader must use the best ideas of others to make decisions. However, a leader cannot wait for others to make up his or her mind.
- Is your will strong and steady? Leaders cannot vacillate or cannot drift in the wind.

Fitness Station #3:

- Can you handle criticism? Can you profit from it? The humble person can learn from petty criticism, even malicious criticism.
- Can you accept opposition to your viewpoint or decision without taking offense? Leaders always face opposition.
- Are you tactful? Can you anticipate how your words will affect a person?
- Do you depend on the praise of others to keep you going? Can you hold steady in the face of disapproval and even temporary loss of confidence.
- Can you forgive or do you nurse resentments and harbor ill-feelings toward those who have injured you?
- Can you turn true disappointment into creative new opportunity?

Fitness Station #3:

- Do you readily gain the cooperation of others and win their respect and confidence?
- Can you exert discipline without making a power play? True leadership is an internal quality of the spirit and needs no show of external force.
- Are you a peacemaker? A leader must be able to reconcile with opponents and make peace where arguments have created hostility.

Fitness Station #4:

- Do people trust you with difficult and delicate situations?
- Can you induce people to do happily some legitimate thing that they would not normally wish to do?
- Can you make and keep friends? Your circle of loyal friends is an index of your leadership potential.
- Are you interested in people? All types? All races? No prejudice?

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Fitness Station #5:

- Are you at ease in the presence of strangers? Do you get nervous in the presence of your superior?
- Are the people who report to you generally at ease? A leader should be sympathetic and friendly.

Fitness Station #6:

- Are you reasonably optimistic? Pessimism and leadership do not mix.
- Do you feel an intense passion? Such singleness of motive will focus your energies and powers on the desired objective. Leaders need a strong focus.
- Do you welcome responsibility?

Fitness Station #7:

- Do other people's failures annoy or challenge you?
- Do you "use" people, or cultivate people?
- Do you direct people, or develop people?
- Do you shun or seek out the person with a special need or problem?

These tests mean little unless we act to correct our deficits and fill in the gaps of our training. Perhaps the final test of leadership potential is whether we "sit" on the results of such an analysis or do something about it.

Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, noted British Army officer, outlined seven qualities necessary for a military leader:

1. avoid getting swamped in detail;
2. not be petty;
3. not be pompous;
4. know how to select people to fit the task;
5. trust others to do a job without the leader's meddling;
6. be capable of clear decisions;
7. inspire confidence.

John Mott, recipient of the 1946 Nobel Peace Prize and long-serving leader of the YMCA, moved in student circles, and his tests covered different territory. Mott said that one should inquire of a leader whether he or she:

1. does little things well;
2. has learned to focus on priorities;
3. uses leisure well;
4. has intensity;
5. knows how to exploit momentum;
6. is growing;
7. overcomes discouragement and "impossible" situations; and
8. understands his or her weaknesses.

Do you have a Leadership Fitness Program?