Possessing the ability to adapt the setting so everyone feels empowered to contribute creatively to solve problems for the common good of the task or organization at hand is the hallmark of a successful leader. He or she must act like a chameleon in adopting stances and language that are primarily helpful to those responsible to the leader. As such, the successful leader understands that leadership is an ability; meaning, a leader has a capacity to do something through talent and skill.

Beyond ability, successful leaders must be adaptive and ready to make adjustments as needs present themselves. A leader who fails to change course when necessary will eventually be lost, and no one is willing to follow someone who is lost for very long. Similarly, the successful leader understands the importance of setting and will necessarily adjust the state of the surroundings and people in order to achieve maximum effectiveness for the group.

The role of, and ability to bestow, empowerment also cannot be understated when describing the traits of a successful leader. Leaders must inspire those around them with confidence and self-esteem. The vehicle or style of inspiration is, in fact, less important than the end product: motivation. As such, the successful leader must possess great empathy and act on people’s feelings. Leaders must make connections that link them to people’s instinct or intuition. The humanistic side of leadership, therefore, must be a paramount consideration for the successful leader. The relationships are everything.
Successful leaders have the ability to create contribution from all members with touch. Whether it comes in the form of sharing an idea or holding an idea on standby while allowing someone else to arrive at the same idea and share it, nurturing the art of contribution through strategic collaboration is essential. When everyone works on the solution to intermediary problems while keeping in mind the larger problem, this group focus on solving the problems means closing the gap between things desired and things perceived. Using one’s creativity, the successful leader nurtures imagination as a fuel when often facing a limit to resources. He or she purposely enables people to use their imagination as a means to sometimes solve problems faster, better and/or less expensively, standard forms of assessment and often the ultimate judge of team and leadership success.

Finally, the ultimate and proverbial successful leader is the person who can create a self-sustaining paradigm of human interaction whereas everyone on a team is developing so that they, too, can possess the same successful leadership traits in time. The most successful teams create a chain reaction of leadership, and it’s the artful leader who can achieve sustainability beyond oneself. This should be a moral imperative for the successful leader.

Influence may be the compelling force for the leadership chain reactions that produce the desired results, such as a common goal. It may, in fact, be the compelling force in leadership. The successful leader understands that influence is what differentiates leadership from management. While it is not necessarily true that the successful manager must also be a good leader, it is nearly absolute that the successful leader must be a skillful manager. While management is a term that connotes stability through the exercise of control and supervision, the concept of leadership conveys dynamism and pro-activity; a successful leader can identify and appreciate this difference.
As a closing thought from Simon Sinek, author of *Start with Why* and inventor of The Golden Circle model for human motivation, “A good leader inspires us to have confidence in what they can do. A great leader inspires us to have confidence in what we can do.” Any portrait of a successful leader must include one’s ability to inspire, motivate and influence those around them. This will lead to shared goals and shared values, key ingredients for all successful leaders.

**Reference**