

# 11 Simple Concepts to Become a Better Leader by Dave Kerpen

Being likeable will help you in your job, business, relationships, and life. I interviewed dozens of successful business leaders [for my last book](#), to determine what made them so likeable and their companies so successful. All of the concepts are simple, and yet, perhaps in the name of revenues or the bottom line, we often lose sight of the simple things - things that not only make us human, but can actually help us become more successful. Below are the eleven most important principles to integrate to become a better leader:

## 1. Listening

*"When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen." - Ernest Hemingway*

Listening is the foundation of any good relationship. Great leaders listen to what their customers and prospects want and need, and they listen to the challenges those customers face. They listen to colleagues and are open to new ideas. They listen to shareholders, investors, and competitors.

## 2. Storytelling

*"Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today." -Robert McAfee Brown*

After listening, leaders need to tell great stories in order to sell their products, but more important, in order to sell their ideas. Storytelling is what captivates people and drives them to take action. Whether you're telling a story to one prospect over lunch, a boardroom full of people, or thousands of people through an online video -

## 3. Authenticity

*"I had no idea that being your authentic self could make me as rich as I've become. If I had, I'd have done it a lot earlier." -Oprah Winfrey*

Great leaders are who they say they are, and they have integrity beyond compare. Vulnerability and humility are hallmarks of the authentic leader and create a positive, attractive energy. Customers, employees, and media all want to help an authentic person to succeed. There used to be a divide between one's public self and private self, but the social internet has blurred that line. Tomorrow's leaders are transparent about who they are online, merging their personal and professional lives together.

## 4. Transparency

*"As a small businessperson, you have no greater leverage than the truth." -John Whittier*

There is nowhere to hide anymore, and businesspeople who attempt to keep secrets will eventually be exposed. Openness and honesty lead to happier staff and customers and colleagues. More important, transparency makes it a lot easier to sleep at night - unworried about what you said to whom, a happier leader is a more productive one.

## 5. Team Playing

*"Individuals play the game, but teams beat the odds." -SEAL Team Saying*

No matter how small your organization, you interact with others every day. Letting others shine, encouraging innovative ideas, practicing humility, and following other rules for working in teams will help you become a more likeable leader. You'll need a culture of success within your organization, one that includes out-of-the-box thinking.

## **6. Responsiveness**

*"Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it." -Charles Swindoll*

The best leaders are responsive to their customers, staff, investors, and prospects. Every stakeholder today is a potential viral sparkplug, for better or for worse, and the winning leader is one who recognizes this and insists upon a culture of responsiveness. Whether the communication is email, voice mail, a note or a tweet, responding shows you care and gives your customers and colleagues a say, allowing them to make a positive impact on the organization.

## **7. Adaptability**

*"When you're finished changing, you're finished." -Ben Franklin*

There has never been a faster-changing marketplace than the one we live in today. Leaders must be flexible in managing changing opportunities and challenges and nimble enough to pivot at the right moment. Stubbornness is no longer desirable to most organizations. Instead, humility and the willingness to adapt mark a great leader.

## **8. Passion**

*"The only way to do great work is to love the work you do." -Steve Jobs*

Those who love what they do don't have to work a day in their lives. People who are able to bring passion to their business have a remarkable advantage, as that passion is contagious to customers and colleagues alike. Finding and increasing your passion will absolutely affect your bottom line.

## **9. Surprise and Delight**

*"A true leader always keeps an element of surprise up his sleeve, which others cannot grasp but which keeps his public excited and breathless." -Charles de Gaulle*

Most people like surprises in their day-to-day lives. Likeable leaders underpromise and overdeliver, assuring that customers and staff are surprised in a positive way. There are a plethora of ways to surprise without spending extra money - a smile, We all like to be delighted — surprise and delight create incredible word-of-mouth marketing opportunities.

## **10. Simplicity**

*"Less isn't more; just enough is more." -Milton Glaser*

The world is more complex than ever before, and yet what customers often respond to best is simplicity — in design, form, and function. Taking complex projects, challenges, and ideas and distilling them to their simplest components allows customers, staff, and other stakeholders to better understand and buy into your vision. We humans all crave simplicity, and so today's leader must be focused and deliver simplicity.

## **11. Gratefulness**

*"I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder." -Gilbert Chesterton*

Likeable leaders are ever grateful for the people who contribute to their opportunities and success. Being appreciative and saying thank you to mentors, customers, colleagues, and other stakeholders keeps leaders humble, appreciated, and well received. It also makes you feel great! Donor's Choose studied the value of a hand-written thank-you note, and actually found donors were 38% more likely to give a 2nd time if they got a hand-written note!

**The Golden Rule: Above all else, treat others as you'd like to be treated**

By showing others the same courtesy you expect from them, you will gain more respect from coworkers, customers, and business partners. Holding others in high regard demonstrates your company's likeability and motivates others to work with you. This seems so simple, as do so many of these principles — and yet many people, too concerned with making money or getting by, fail to truly adopt these key concepts.

*Which of these principles are most important to you — what makes you likeable?*