



## Management Thought Leaders

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### **The 7 Attributes of Top Leaders**

Warren Bennis, widely regarded as a pioneer of the contemporary field of leadership, is an American scholar, organizational consultant and author. He is a Distinguished Professor of Business Administration at the University of Southern California and was founding chairman of the USC Leadership Institute. In the past decade, he served as chairman of the Advisory Board of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Throughout his career, Bennis consulted for many Fortune 500 companies and served as advisor to four U.S. presidents. He also served on the faculty of MIT's Sloan School of Management, was a former faculty member of Boston University, former Provost and Executive Vice President of State University of New York at Buffalo and President of the University of Cincinnati. His global experience includes teaching at the Indian Institute of Management--Calcutta, INSEAD, the London Business School, and IMEDE (now IMD).

In 2007, Business Week named Bennis one of ten business school professors who have had the greatest influence on business thinking. Accordingly, he has received 20 honorary degrees and authored or coauthored more than 20 books on leadership, change, and management, including *Organizing Genius* and *Co-Leaders*. Three of his passions are -leadership, organizational change, and creative collaboration.

Leadership guru, Warren Bennis, offers the following 7 attributes that make top leaders outstanding in their field.

1. **Technical Competence.** This is what Bennis calls business literacy and a grasp of one's field. If you don't know the ins and outs of your business, you're going to be at a serious disadvantage when facing the competition. Become an obsessive student of your business field until you know intimately how it works.
2. **Conceptual Skills.** This is a faculty for abstract thinking. It includes what Jonathan Swift called "seeing the invisible" ie visualizing where people can go and what they can achieve. Practice taking time out to play with your thoughts of where you can go and where your team can go.

3. **Track Record.** This is a history of achieving results. Your track record enhances your credibility and therefore your authority. Don't let any kind of achievement go by without recording it and using it to let people know you're a person who gets results.
4. **People Skills.** Of all the people skills that you need to have to get people working with you, the top 3 in Bennis' opinion are the ability to communicate, motivate, and delegate. Develop these three skills until you are a master.
5. **Taste.** The concept of "taste" is an intuitive sense of where talent lies. Great leaders are those who spot the potential right under their nose. When others just see people as resources on a balance sheet, successful leaders see them as potential to be developed. Get a taste for the talent on your team.
6. **Judgment.** Few leaders today are able to operate in perfect conditions. More often than not, they have to take decisions in imperfect conditions. That's when their judgment comes into play. When time is short or when data is lacking, great leaders rely on intuition to get them through. Make that sixth sense your best friend.
7. **Character.** The qualities that define *who you are* comprise your character; not personality or your outward public face. The values inside you matter more than anything else. Decide what yours are and remain true to those qualities.

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