The idea of leadership has changed in the last 50 years with the emergence of what Joseph Rost called Post-Industrial Leadership. This form of leadership focuses more on the relationship between the leader and the follower. It considers the level of positive influence the leader has on the follower and the choice the follower makes to buy into the ideas, the approach, and the personality of the leader. This shift has led to more of a focus on collaboration among the leader and the team rather than the work of a singular individual.

The shift to a Post-Industrial Leadership style has altered the way that leaders work, because taking a leadership position is no longer rooted in their ability to do a job or their knowledge of the industry. Instead, there is more focus on the interpersonal skills of a leader.

With this shift the question becomes what qualities and skills leaders need to have as they step into the job market. The following are skills and qualities that effective leaders need to have or develop to guide their teams and shape their organizations.

**EFFECTIVE LEADERS ARE SELF-AWARE**

Understanding where you have been and knowing where you want to go as a leader is known as developing a **consciousness of self** and is the foundation of a theory known as the Social Change Model for Leadership Development.
To develop an understanding of what kind of leader you want to be, consider the following questions:

• What kind of person and/or leader do I want to be?
• How do others see me as a leader?
• Who am I here for?
• Am I a good example to the people I work with?

Please know that as you take time to process these questions, there is a likelihood that more questions will arise. Take time to consider them, because the more you know about yourself, the better leader you will develop into.

EFFECTIVE LEADERS LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND

One of the most important skills a leader needs to have is the ability to effectively communicate in a clear and transparent manner. However, speaking is not the most vital communication skill leaders need to have; they need to be strong listeners. Listening is the most important skill to being an effective communicator, but it is also the most underutilized skill.

Listening allows a leader to learn from the people who are doing the work, to gain new perspective and, most importantly, it empowers followers. If a leader takes the time to listen to understand, it can give the follower a sense that their ideas and opinions matter, and that is when buy-in begins to happen.

For a leader to listen to understand, they must recognize that they do not have all of the answers, and this can add value to the experience that the followers bring to the organization.

Before you jump in and say something, stop, ask the people you are talking with for their opinion, and stop talking.

EFFECTIVE LEADERS ARE VULNERABLE

Being vulnerable can go against our instinct for self-protection, but being vulnerable as a leader creates an environment based on empowerment and learning.

Followers are looking to the leadership to be an example of the expectations of the organization. For this reason, it is important that leaders be humble and willing to acknowledge when they do not have the answers or when they have made a mistake. Leaders need to be willing to ask for feedback from followers so they can continue to grow and develop. This shows people that no one is expected to be perfect and that we are willing not only to make mistakes but acknowledge them so everyone can learn.

EFFECTIVE LEADERS ARE COMPASSIONATE

As leaders we need to recognize that life cannot be compartmentalized. What happens at home can affect people at work, and vice versa. We cannot expect people to always be “on” as there may be troubles at home or struggles with a friend. Being a compassionate leader allows you to demonstrate that you see the employee as a person and not just a part of the greater machine. Demonstrating this can empower an individual to buy into what you and the organization is attempting to do because you are demonstrating that you have bought into them.

EFFECTIVE LEADERS ARE NOT ABOVE THE TEAM

Most companies follow a hierarchical approach to leadership where there is distance between the leaders and the followers. However, this approach can limit the understanding of situations and solutions because, in a culture that is hierarchical, the follower tends to not have a voice.

Effective leaders make a priority to shrink the perceived space between the leaders and the followers by connecting with them on a personal level. This personal connection does not need to be deep, but it is important to acknowledge that the employee has a life outside of work. This relationship helps leaders to refocus their perception of an employee away from being just a part of the machine. They begin to see them as a human being.

Creating a connection as a leader empowers followers to be open and honest without fear of retribution. It fosters collaboration and can create a working environment that people enjoy coming to because they feel valued and supported.

Leadership now is less about managing a process and more about leading people. It is about seeing people as assets to the organization based on their perceptions and experiences. It is about getting people to buy into you as the leader, which can only happen when people feel valued and accepted as someone who can add more rather than someone who is replaceable. Finally, it is about building that trusting relationship that empowers followers.

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In his free time, Robert volunteers with local organizations like the Rape and Abuse Crisis Center and is an alumni advisor for a fraternity at Minnesota State University Moorhead.