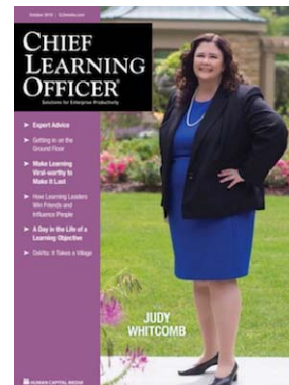


## Are You a Perceptive Leader?

Perceptive leaders have six traits or talents that can make all the difference when it comes to creating a workplace where things get done.

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By [Rita Balian Allen](#)



Leadership is a complex topic. It requires a range of competencies to be effective, and it has many layers as organizations are looking for leaders at every level, within all functions. Tapping into and unleashing leadership potential is one of the learning leader's key objectives, in addition to developing skills with which to build the talent pool. Doing so heightens an organization's ability to retain talent, meet business goals and gain competitive edge within the marketplace.

There are various leadership models at work in the industry, including compassionate leadership. We know what a difference it makes when employees feel valued, appreciated and acknowledged for their contributions. Taking an extra few moments to express interest and concern indicates a level of care that goes a long way to build credibility. Employees want and need to know their leader cares. Showing transparency and genuine vulnerability makes a leader relatable.

Compassion is also a sign of strength, and it can create an environment of trust. In September, Oprah interviewed Jeff Weiner, CEO of LinkedIn Corp., on her show "Super Soul Sunday" and discussed his transformation and appreciation for the power of compassion as a foundation of leadership at LinkedIn. He shared the profound impact it has made, creating a culture of compassion that guides all decisions — even the difficult ones — which results in successful outcomes for all.

Now, many ask if compassion is a learned skill, or does it need to be innate? As learning leaders, our answer will more likely be that it can be developed further on the continuum. Although there are many competencies to focus on to heighten our level of compassion, we must start with a foundation of understanding, intuition and perceptiveness. Here are six traits and talents that a perceptive leader should have:

1. **Self-awareness:** Leadership starts and ends with inner strength, which requires an intimate knowledge of one's strengths, development areas, values and priorities, motivations, limitations, interests and goals. Spending ongoing time reflecting on growth is key for a leader to leverage their strengths and pushing in new ways, taking risks and allowing for learning to occur. This deep reflection also enables one to identify successes, energizers and assets in addition to triggers, stressors and derailers.

2. **Active listening:** To communicate and influence effectively, one has to be an active listener first; listen to understand, not respond. Listening is just as crucial, if not more, than verbal communication. Practicing active listening, reflecting back on what is heard in order to confirm comprehension can be the differentiator in yielding ideal results.
3. **Empathy:** In addition to hearing others' perspectives, it is necessary to step into their shoes to understand it from their viewpoint. A perceptive leader can read other people through not only their words but also through their body language, their facial expressions and visible cues that go well beyond the spoken words. They can pick up on others' emotions to better understand what's really happening; they perceive what other people are feeling and thinking even if they don't feel the same way.
4. **Optimism:** Leaders are role models and set the tone for preferred behaviors, norms and standards for the team. We lead by example to inspire and motivate others. The perceptive leader leads with optimism and positivity as they share their thoughts, perspectives and insights. In doing so, they articulate and propose their ideas in a manner that is confident, credible and persuasive.
5. **Strategic thinking:** Effective leadership entails proactive strategic thinking that is aligned with business goals and objectives. The perceptive leader is a strategic visionary who envisions and anticipates future needs. This individual looks ahead, translates goals and objectives to others and executes plans according to those strategic imperatives.
6. **Focus/discipline:** Focus can be the differentiator between effectiveness and ineffectiveness. The ability to prioritize objectives, responsibilities and projects, and delegate properly is essential. Understanding when and how to focus energies on the right things at the right time and to maximize individual and team productivity, performance and effectiveness is also key.

While there are many competencies to focus on to heighten our level of compassion, we must start with a foundation of understanding, intuition and perceptiveness. A perceptive leader shows proactive and sensitive insight to relationships and situations. Thus, developing perceptive leaders can be an asset for any organization.

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