

The skills of the 21st century leader

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I recently met with leaders and managers from several Fortune 500 companies to discuss "the skills, behaviors and development experiences to support 21st century leadership."

In the interest of sharing, I enclose an unattributed list of themes that emerged during our meetings, together with links to research and reference sources on 21st century leadership that helped to stimulate and shape our discussions.

The 21st century leader — topics and emerging themes:

- Leading by creating a vision and shared purpose (not through title)
- Digital is everywhere. The exchange of information and ideas happens instantaneously
- Digital success also requires complementary 'non-digital' skills (e.g. complex problem-solving, social skills, design skills)
- Leadership orientation is toward inclusiveness, being of service and of use - including supporting the broader social & environmental good
- Having a strategy and plan but being highly adaptive (recognizing the complexity and speed of change of the modern business world)
- Seeing opportunities everywhere and finding ways to make the most of them
- Solving problems as leadership teams and communities, not just through individual experts
- Being an innovator not an administrator. Being open to experimentation, risk taking (mistakes/learning) & entrepreneurship
- Distributed leadership
- Managing our energy as well as our time
- Enhancing our collaboration and influencing skills (a significant number of relationships and interfaces are now horizontal)
- Our ability to rapidly form teams, deliver, disband and reform is a competitive advantage
- We cannot do everything asked of us or know everything. Establishing priorities is important, as is knowing when to say no, and accepting when you don't know
- We need to manage stress and help others to
- We need to think where the market is heading; we need to understand multiple cultures

References and research sources:

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3. James Strock, Serving to lead <https://servetolead.org/book-author/james-strock/>
4. Josh Bersin et al, ((Deloitte) Human Capital Trends), The rise of the social enterprise <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/focus/human-capital-trends.html>
5. Alan Seale, (The Center for Transformational Presence), New world, new rules, new approaches <https://transformationalpresence.org/leadership-center/>
6. Frederic Laloux, Reinventing organizations <http://www.reinventingorganizations.com>
7. Glenn Llopis, Six Characteristics Define 21st Century Leadership <https://www.forbes.com/sites/glennllopis/2015/04/01/six-characteristics-define-21st-century-leadership/#6518670e358e>