

LEADERSHIP FILES

NEWSLETTER



5 SIGNS OF POTENTIAL

"Where you will sit when you are old shows where you stood in youth." - Yoruba Proverb

Children can show leadership signs as early as kindergarten. When the kids play and it's clear who's setting up the game or directing the steps or coordinating, we're looking at an energy emerging that could be nurtured. Or stifled.

Started in [my intro](#) for this series, it's my position that everyone can manifest leadership energy to govern themselves with fewer becoming leaders of people or ideas.

This is partly due to dissipation through the formal education system; it trains on information absorption, what to think rather than how to think, less so about how to become a (wise) leader.

Unless there's active intervention by a support system or that young being is strong enough to overcome the resistance, the child eventually has its leadership energy suppressed in favor of compliance life modes because those modes produce the results that may generate socially accepted career ascension.

I remember writing an essay in undergrad (specific topic escapes me now) and consciously knew there were two ways to approach the question.

One was the politically correct way that would give me the A, the answer the professor wanted, but I knew the answer would be borderline untrue. It was really more complex.

The other was more authentic and I was willing to provide additional sources. Chose the second option and received a C.

If we examine this kind of quiet leaning towards compliance over original thinking for a young one growing up, constantly facing this and caving, we can see some of the reasons why we have less wise leaders.

While there are many formal education options for management training it's more difficult to construct them for leadership. It's because leadership largely deals with abilities and not knowledge.

For example, a manager may know the best process to execute steps but it takes communication ability to deliver the steps to the team so they resonate and are moved in unison with them.

A manager can be astute at formulas and models but having a keen pulse on how they relate to the vision, in the way the team sees it, and the EQ to merge them for mutual understanding are necessary abilities.

The leader has to be able to identify the abilities and recognize the signs in people, then facilitate environments for people to harness them.

If you think about the people in your life who made great leadership impact, you'll notice it was their ability to pinpoint what your talents were and how to help you bring them forth, not just the information you know.



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Some signs to explore:

Confidentiality

People trust your principles around privacy. In a world where revealing all is the trend, you stand apart with intentional silence particularly when it comes to information about other people.

In professions that involve frequent interpersonal relations, your confidentiality demonstrates self-control, ability to avoid gossip and conscientiousness around how defamation issues can arise. You know what to share, when and how to share as necessary.

If this is genuine, people trust you can construct a safe container for them to express knowing they can rely on the value you provide.

I would pair confidentiality with maturity and a responsibility sense.

The leader needs to have a lens that recognizes the weight of responsibility in their hands when someone does confide in them, opening their minds to be receptive to information that can influence (more details on this in the coming art of coaching series).

What you say or suggest can have the potential to shift your client or team member towards elevation or recoiling. Maturity is necessary to not mishandle that information or take advantage of the container.

Composure

Being steady, undisturbed despite the circumstances around you.

There's philosophy in the public square that requests the leader to wear the full emotional spectrum on their sleeves as a tactical mode of relating to their people. But when in a crisis or grand changes or decisions have to be made I find this philosophy to be weak when tested; there are many ways to cultivate rapport but people don't trust instability in a leader. They trust someone who has their head solid on the shoulders with a sense of direction.

Imagine stepping into an Uber and observing the driver shaking in the boots being on the road, making indecisive turns and telling you they're just as afraid of holding the steering wheel. Entrusting your time (and perhaps life) to this person driving, you might want to get out of the vehicle as fast as possible. Perhaps you're the one people look to among friends because of your level-headedness. With confidentiality, you're trustworthy and they can relax knowing you can carry an unwavering direction.

Rebellion

This tends to have a negative reputation but some disruption or not following everything as status quo is a leadership prerequisite.

By the energy's nature you're leading some idea, people or self along a new path. That usually involves being in disagreement with some way things are done or an attempt at something different.

Depending on the creative power, sometimes it's necessary to bring the concept forth and prove its benefit before the public agrees.

Rebelling is a leadership signal for better or worse; you have the will to disagree or pose a challenge. On one extreme it's antisocial. On the other, it can lift up an idea or group. Sometimes it's a matter of perspective.

Perhaps you accomplished this with an idea in a social organization you were part of or through your workplace. Maybe you display this tendency in personal life and find yourself treading new ground often.

Vision

Creating something new, you can see where something is possible. You're comfortable envisioning realities. What does not yet exist, you can forecast.

It's a skill to be able to conceive of new realities and a strength to allow oneself to entertain the possibilities; it's a greater strength to communicate those visions for people to receive and embrace. And scrutinize.

It's a civilizational pattern: an idea emerges that can advance some domain and the population shuts it down for lack of understanding. The idea carrier (usually the leader / creator) bears the weight of persisting to see this idea manifest and is targeted for it. Today we might call it canceling.

If the idea truly has value, it emerges in some form the population eventually embraces while not always crediting the leader / creator for it.

Maybe you saw an innovative way to solve a problem at work or in your life circle and was on the receiving end of some of this pattern.





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To help reduce some of the pushback's intensity, you need razor sharp communication skills: verbal, written and kinesthetic to share the idea in a way that people can relate. Effective communication helps others understand it, be inspired by it and encourages participation. This leads to the last sign here.

Vested Interest in People

If you're a student of history, philosophy and cultures you likely have a comprehensive understanding of people.

Far different from seeing people as organic experiments (quite a sociopathic approach; this is what cult leaders do), you have a genuine appreciation for learning about the value systems and life modes across the world.

Even if you don't agree with everything, it conveys understanding, a bridge that transcends differences. This kind of study also reveals the commonalities among people, shared values and purposes.

If your EQ, [Nunchi](#) and IQ are high enough, this knowledge equips you with insight to positively connect with nearly anyone you meet.

Trent Rhodes is an autodidact, career development leader, polymath writer & educator. With a passion for martial arts, tea and tech, he's an avid reader and writes on topics bridging futuristic career education and self-directed learning. Discover more of his work on his blog, [Crown of Mind](#) and [MasterLearn](#).

