
What makes a good leader?



By [Jane Williams](#)

What qualities are necessary in a global environment of economic uncertainty and political change, in which - thanks to technology - change happens at warp speed? Participants at INSEAD's Leadership Summit Middle East in Abu Dhabi in January speak out...

With consumers on the move, companies need leaders who are not only socially aware, but are prepared to keep innovating and adapting their products to meet changing demands. "I've always been fascinated by transformational leaders because they change the way things are," says **Hal Gregersen**, INSEAD's senior affiliate professor of leadership. According to Gregersen great entrepreneurial leaders, like Apple's late CEO Steve Jobs, question everything, scrutinise everyone and experiment with new ideas. "They get great ideas which disrupt entire industries and create lots of jobs."

And they inspire their employees to follow suit. **Waleed Al Somali**, administrator of personal development at Saudi Aramco, Saudi Arabia's US\$8 trillion oil producer (and the largest in the world), told Knowledge that great leaders were able to transform a company through their charisma and spark. "Having vision that ties and ignites the passion of members of an organisation towards success is important for any leader for transformation to take place," Al Somali says.

Easy victories are cheap

Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, the U.A.E.'s minister of higher education, and keynote speaker at the INSEAD leadership summit, says that having the vision and wisdom to see beyond the horizon and chart a path for a country's (or company's) future, should be expected of any leader. It is the leader with the wisdom and courage to guide people along that path with competence and integrity who is truly great.

"I believe that anyone who is, or aspires to be a leader should wish to be held accountable, should embrace the need for transparency realising that the true measurement of leadership is in terms of the importance and challenge the leader faces," he notes. "Easy victories are cheap whatever the field of endeavour."

Waleed Al Mokarrab Al Muhairi, chief operating officer at Mubadala, Abu Dhabi's US\$46 billion state investment fund, says leadership in the U.A.E. is about linking vision, culture and values. "For us the main lesson in leadership is not just adherence to your targets or the other half of the mandate; it's about making sure you're a great example both internally and externally with the community."

Leaving a legacy

Sheikh Nahyan believes that the definition of "leadership" for Emiratis begins with the U.A.E.'s founder, the late Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan, credited with uniting seven, often feuding, states into a nation; and using its vast oil wealth to transform, in a single generation, the desert country into a sophisticated, modern economy. Eight years after his death Sheikh Zayed's image is still plastered across the country on buildings, billboards and car bonnets. "Sheikh Zayed formed a nation that looks to the future," Sheikh Nahyan says. "To be sure he moved the U.A.E. forward to astounding bottom lines ... but more important were his wisdom, his practical competence and his integrity. He was always determined to discover what was morally right and always had the courage to do what was morally right. That is the bottom line that matters most."

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