

Qualities of Effective Co-op Leaders



Drawn heavily from: *20 Qualities of Effective Cooperative Leaders*: Laird Schaub <https://www.blogger.com/profile/01751204926086189047>

- 1. Ability to hear fully what others are saying.** *Note that this implies more than just getting the concepts right; it also involves getting the tone right, and the affect. Even more subtly, it implies being able to show others that what they've said has been fully heard. (Hint: it is often insufficient to merely assert that you've heard someone.)*
- 2. Ability to hear critical feedback accurately and with minimal reactivity or defensiveness.** *This is a big one. Leaders who are poor at this teach their groups to not bother to attempt it, resulting in disgruntlement and undermined authority. If you're having trouble with the leader's behavior and they'll punish you for pointing it out, what options do you have? Not good.*
- 3. Ability to respond with openness and curiosity when people disagree and good at bridging divergent viewpoints.** *Responding with curiosity is about being able to resist the temptation to tense up in the face of divergence and to model excitement instead. (Hot dog, the group will have a range of perspectives to weigh in its deliberations!) The point of operating cooperatively is not to have everyone respond harmoniously; it's to have the richest possible stew of ideas to work with. When there is diversity, bridge positions so that both parties feel heard and respected, illuminating a pathway of connection that might not have been visible to either side.*
- 4. Doesn't act as a martyr.** *This means resisting the temptation to use their contributions—however unique and/or heroic—to pressure people (even subtly) into siding with what the leader wants and not valuing what others want just as much. The most insidious version of this involves the leader asking the group to support their requests because of all that they've sacrificed for the group—regardless of whether the group asked the leader to make those sacrifices.*
- 5. Knows their weaknesses and reports authentically on their emotional state.** *First, they don't try to BS others into thinking they're strong in places where they aren't. Second, a key to effective leadership is coming across as real person, including being able to share feelings in a way that's both accessible and believable.*
- 6. Models interest in learning.** *Leaders are often in the position of teaching others what they know. While that's good, it helps a lot if they're also interested in learning from others.*
- 7. Fosters an environment of sharing the stage with others and appreciating the contributions of others.** *Sharing includes passing on what they know if the group depends on that skill (but not monopolizing discussions in doing so). Good leaders encourage others to grow into leadership and being gracious when others step up to either help, or take on leadership roles.*

8. Discipline to: a) use air time concisely and on topic and b) follow through on commitments. *a) Leaders tend to lose social capital if they are unable to display terminal facility, or regularly invite the group to board cross-town buses to explore side traffic. b) Every time you make a promise you don't keep, a little more air escapes from your credibility balloon.*

9. Functions well in chaos, and when the stakes are high. *It can be a contribution of no small dimension if a leader can trail blaze a path through dense woods, especially when others feel trapped in the trees. Being able to perform with grace under pressure includes being able to think lucidly and act with nuance and effectiveness with there is a lot at stake.*

10. Can follow as well as lead, and willing to cheerfully do their share of the grunt work. *In cooperative groups, it tends to be important that the same person is not always the leader. Leadership can be fluid if it is encouraged. (How can you ask others to respond well to you as a leader if you're not capable of modeling that when you're responding to others as leaders?)*