



# Character

Thoughts on leadership  
by Karl Pister



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We have spoken extensively regarding the imperative you have, as leaders, to be out in front of your people and literally walking with them as they go through these extremely challenging times. Quarantines have changed how you walk with your people. Zoom, Skype, phone, and social distancing are now the ways you 'walk'.

Today our theme goes more inward than outward. It might be called 'mirror time', since the only judge of today's topic is you. However, the results of today's thoughts go well beyond the mirror and effect practically every aspect of what you do, how you are perceived, and how well people will follow you.

The topic today is character. A dictionary definition of character is described as: the sum of the moral or mental qualities which distinguish an individual...or a race; moral qualities strongly developed or strikingly displayed.



One of the surgeons I work with said it well when he commented that *'this is the time that our leadership will be defined'* as he referred to the post-pandemic world that he is entering. Another similar quote states: *leaders aren't made in time of crisis, they're revealed.*

As you lead your people into this next phase, who will they be following? Remember that people won't follow a vision until they can connect with and follow you. And people are pretty good at detecting fluff, especially in times of crisis.

As you read this, take out a piece of paper and write responses to the following questions:

- What are the top five qualities that define you?
- How much do you focus on developing and enhancing those?
- How is the message you want your people to carry forward over the next few months going to be influenced by those qualities?



- Do you model your communications and actions so that they reflect those qualities?
- What are the gaps you see in your character that could minimize your effectiveness in leadership?
- How would you rate yourself on the following statement from a wise leader: *"Thus, character is demonstrated by looking and reaching outward when the natural and instinctive response is to be self-absorbed and turn inward"*.

How true that quote is during times of crisis. That self-absorption can also mean absorption into professional urgencies and tasks that cause you to overlook what your people need in pursuit of your lists of tasks and vital results. Not saying those tasks and results are not vital. Just be careful of the order of priorities.



So, to close, consider two items I read just this morning on leadership:

- Imagine that every day is a job interview for you and your leadership. How does that cause you to lead differently?
- Ask yourself: What reasons do I give anyone to want to follow my leadership? Would I want to follow myself?

Take some time to consider these questions. Reflection is always a part of leadership.





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