

Why Should I Follow You?

by David C. Miller

1. Motives

A follower will only accept your influence and direction if they believe you're primarily committed to **the success of the group**, rather than **your own success**. Your primary task as leader is **helping others succeed**. If a follower doesn't trust your motives, nothing else will matter because **the most important thing is your integrity**.

How do you convince a follower that your motives are good?

Actions will speak more loudly than words. Do you make it a habit of **helping others on the team** in terms of time, support and ideas—even when there are no immediate benefits to you? Are there examples where you **put another person's interests first**? What's your track record as a **team player**? Do you keep everyone in the group **informed**? Do you **take the time** to teach and coach?

2. Values

After motives, the next thing a follower wants to know is "What are your **core values**?" They will accept your influence, guidance and direction if they believe they **share similar goals** with you—ones that **inspire** them. People want to follow a leader who has **crystal clear values** that they act on. They want to be led by **a person of principle**, not by someone who is driven by expediency.

They will look at your **behavior** to decide what your values are. Did you ever incur **personal cost** to stand by your values? Did you ever **turn away** a prospect or work because taking it would violate your code of values?

Some leaders feel that you never turn away any revenue as long as an "adequate" job can be done. You've just sent a message! Are you **practicing what you preach**?

3. Competence

Next, for a follower is to listen to you, they require you to have **constructive new ideas** on how to improve things. It's often said that leaders must have vision. But isn't vision the easy part? "Let's be the best, work as a team, provide superior service"—the words are always the same! What's hard is coming up with **innovative approaches** that will help the team achieve these goals!

What's your track record for creating **new ways** of doing things?

Have you ever suggested, introduced, or implemented **new approaches to creating value** for customers? Maybe solved a problem in customer service or marketing? Shared new methodologies, templates or tools? Offered new ways to train and develop people? Where is the **evidence of your creativity** in running any aspect of your business?

4. Style

After all others, a follower will be interested in your style. Great leaders are **effective coaches**, helping everyone on the team to stretch and to fulfill their goals. They must excel at two seemingly opposing skills: they must be **supportive and nurturing**, as well as **continually demanding** their followers to stretch to the next goal.

Only demanding, you'll be perceived as Atilla the Hun. Only nurturing, you'll be perceived as weak. In either case, people won't follow you. What people need in a leader is a **friendly skeptic**, a **loving critic**, a **challenging supporter**—someone who'll give **both positive and negative feedback** and is involved enough to know when either is due.

A leader doesn't build a business—a leader builds an organization that builds a business. For you to be perceived as a leader, you must be interested in building a team and be prepared to **get your satisfaction** from the success of others.