



NAC Executive Insights

Leadership Wisdoms— Learn from the Masters

Key Points

This insight will share leadership wisdoms collected from NAC members. Key points include:

- Comprehending and understanding leadership wisdoms provide a basis for individuals to begin the development of their own leadership style.
- It is important to educate new industry members in leadership competencies to better enable them to lead and manage the challenges in the construction industry.
- Leaders are encouraged to practice these leadership competencies to “walk the talk.”
- It is encouraged that new industry members observe leaders in their industry environment to see which of these leadership competencies and wisdoms are utilized in their leadership styles.

Introduction

The following wisdom-based leadership competencies were collected from a survey of NAC members. The foundation is to define leadership through the most widely held wisdoms and their underlying logic. Wisdom is gained through experience, understanding, insight, common sense, and intelligent reflection.

Wisdoms from Influential and Senior Construction Leaders

Circa 2007, 14 NAC members were interviewed to share their leadership knowledge gained throughout their careers, resulting in a collection of 115 wisdoms. These individuals have a long history of success, decades of experience, and have provided distinguished service to our industry.

After review, analysis, and filtering, the top 43 survey wisdoms were grouped into the 16 competency categories shown in Table 1. Each of these wisdoms represents a behavior or action that, when successfully implemented, will improve the overall effectiveness of the emerging leader. It is evident that use of these leadership wisdoms change as your education and experience changes.

Table 1: Top 43 Wisdoms - Categorized by 16 Competencies	
Competency	NAC Leadership Wisdom
Accountability	1. When mistakes are made, own up to it right away and find a solution. 2. Great leaders are first to accept blame and quick to give credit.
Ambition	3. Do an outstanding job, plus one more thing. 4. Deliver more than people expect.
Attitude	5. A positive attitude is contagious. 6. Stay optimistic.
Change	7. You learn from your mistakes, so do something. 8. You grow or you go. 9. Constant challenges require constant learning. 10. Change is a fact, learn to embrace it. 11. Do not get comfortable, leadership is about taking risks.
Communication	12. Listen to people. 13. People need to know their efforts contribute to the whole. 14. The better the communication, the greater the trust. 15. Magic words: please, thank you, you're welcome, yes sir, no sir, no ma'am, yes ma'am, good job, good question, and if you please.
Diversity	16. Recognize and accept people's differences. 17. Everyone is unique and this is OK; you cannot be someone else.
Employee Growth	18. Training and development of employees is an investment, not an expense. 19. Our greatest successes are achieved when we develop others.
Empowerment	20. Hire the best people and get out of their way. 21. Identify people and utilize their strengths.
Ethics	22. Always do what you think is right. 23. Be succinct, honest, and ethical.
Foresight	24. Study the future, it will be here sooner than you think. 25. Come up with multiple solutions because it causes you to think.
Modeling the Way	26. Great leaders are superb teachers and continuously share their wisdom. 27. Care for people, share the wealth, and give credit.
Personal Growth	28. Study people you admire and pull from them the qualities you want to emulate. 29. Take time to smell the roses; balance is the key to success. 30. Much can be learned from both good and deficient leaders as well as from good and bad situations. 31. Mistake are inevitable, learn from them. 32. You can learn a lot from others if you are willing to listen. 33. Continue to learn.
Relationships	34. Know who's on your molecule and maintain win-win relationships with all. 35. Relationships are important, make people feel valued. 36. It's about people, not things.
Servant Leadership	37. True leaders understand they can never serve themselves until they learn to serve others. 38. I have never had an employee, I work for them. 39. Develop others.
Teamwork	40. Achieving success as a team multiplies the victory. 41. Get out on the job, pat people on the back, and tell them "good job."
Leadership vs Management	42. Leadership and management are two different things and you must be successful at both. 43. You are hired for you technical skills, fired for your lack of people skills, and promoted for your leadership and management skills.

The NAC members interviewed were:

1. Bud Ahearn
2. Bill Badger
3. Bob Bittner
4. Jack Buffington
5. Jim Doebler
6. Art Fort
7. Russ Fuhrman
8. Edd Gibson
9. Joe Martinelli
10. John Mihm
11. Dave Nash
12. Jim Porter
13. Doug Pruitt
14. Chris Reseigh

About the Authors

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