

Leadership by Guss

by Mike Hawkins
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Dogs are great pets, but I'm giving our 3 year old mini-goldendoodle a promotion from great pet to great leader. While a friend of ours was snowshoeing with Elizabeth and me, we were talking and watching our dog Guss. It dawned on us how many great leadership qualities he exhibits. I'll admit to being a bit biased toward my buddy Guss and a dog lover, but maybe you will agree.

Here are twelve important leadership characteristics we observed, one for each month of the year, which we would all do well to imitate:

- 1. Leads by example.** While we were heading to our destination, our leader Guss was always in front. Not so far that we couldn't see him, but just far enough that we could observe him as he created the path and set the direction for us to follow.
- 2. Serves.** Our leader was constantly seeking to serve and please us. He proactively brought us valuable resources (bones, sticks, and balls) without having to ask for them. He put us first and himself second. While not counting on it, he knew we would return the favor.
- 3. Exhibits temporal intelligence.** Our leader had a good sense of timing. He knew when it was best to wait and when it was best to take action. When we weren't quite ready, he sensed it and waited patiently. When we were ready, he sensed it and jumped into action.
- 4. Displays emotional intelligence.** Our leader was good at reading us and picking up on subtle cues. He noticed our body language and voice inflections. He could tell when we were upset or happy. He knew when to stay away and when to approach us.
- 5. Works as a team player.** Our leader had a genuine interest in being with us and part of our team. He stayed with us even when other distractions could have drawn him away. We knew we could count on him to protect us and watch out for our best interests.
- 6. Gathers trust.** Our leader was honest, authentic, and competent. He never said or committed to something that he didn't back up with action. He was never misleading. He always let us know what he was thinking (with his wagging tail).
- 7. Displays courage.** Our leader was courageous. He was goal oriented rather than risk averse. He didn't let any fear or doubt hold him back. He didn't make up excuses or blame others. Even though our journey was not completely safe, or known, he fully engaged and finished it.



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8. Continuously learns. Our leader didn't get stuck in the rut of complacency. He didn't remain satisfied with what he knew or could do. He pursued higher levels of performance. He continuously learned (new tricks) as we progressed on our journey.

9. Adapts and resolves problems. Our leader adapted to the environment we were in. He confronted and overcome every obstacle we encountered (fallen trees and snow drifts). He made adjustments when they were needed and never lost sight of our objective.

10. Works intentionally and persists. Our leader didn't give up when the going got tough. He stayed focused. He didn't put off his responsibility until the next day or week. Neither did he consider his work complete until we had fully reached our objective. He worked tirelessly and intentionally.

11. Makes decisions and takes action. When it was time to take action, our leader was ready. Without delay, he was the first to go. He asserted himself. He didn't wait until everything was perfect or until our plan had been repeatedly reviewed until it was diluted down with everyone's petty desires.

12. Motivates and has fun. Our leader did his job, but didn't take it too seriously. He was always in a good mood. He liked to work hard, but he liked to play too. He had fun and cheered the rest of us on. We couldn't help but take on his enthusiastic spirit and can-do positive attitude. .

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.activatingyourambition.com), and president of Alpine Link Corporation (www.alpinelink.com), a consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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