

4 Virtues That Sound Leaders Possess

posted 7/816 to *Upstart Business Journal* by Billy Arcement, Contributing Writer

A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of themselves.

The virtuous person tends toward the good with all their sensory and spiritual powers; they pursue the good and choose it in concrete actions.

Recently, I came across an article on *The Cardinal Virtues* of the Catholic Church. I was struck how relevant these virtues are in the world of business as well as in religious doctrine.

Here's why they play a significant role in the effectiveness we achieve as a leader.

1. Temperance

No, I'm not about to discuss alcohol or prohibition. There are other situations where temperance can exist.

In the business world, what leader does not need to temper their approach in some circumstances? When the rigors of a complex project drains energy and creates discouragement, it's self-discipline that keeps you moving.

It's being able to deny ourselves the distractions that get in the way of our path to success that drives us forward in a positive way. Having self-control allows you to delay gratification today as a trade-off for greater long-term success. And, most importantly, people that make temperance part of their daily habits win! Being more in control of your actions propels you ahead to your desired destination much more rapidly.

On a broader front, exercising temperance can make dramatic changes in your life. Excess in most areas of life can result in an ugly situation.

Regarding work, there should be a tempering of our work ethic. Some of us are workaholics. Others are slackers. In both cases, temperance would enhance these habits. Workaholics can temper their behaviors to bring more balance to their life.

I don't believe anyone on their death bed said, "*I wish I would have spent more time at the office.*" And the slacker, unlike the workaholic, must bring more of their abilities and participation to the forefront. The risk is being fired or never getting an opportunity to rise in the ranks.

Self-denial, self-control, self-discipline— characteristics of a winner that practices temperance.

2. Prudence

Being able to avoid judgmental behavior is a good use of your judgement. Confusing? Perhaps saying “wisdom” enables you to make the right judgement about people and business decisions is more clear.

Leaders must have the wisdom to clarify what the future needs to look like, what actions will create success and which actions need to be avoided. Exercising a bit of discretion further clarifies choices, decisions and important responsibilities. Discretion shows good judgement and a strong ability to discern the right place to position ourselves for success.

The prudent person determines and directs judgment and is able to apply moral principles of behavior to overcome doubts and achieve good.

Being prudent means you understand priorities, what’s important in the long term and what behaviors make all this happen. Leaders who understand how to make the right call in all situations take on the persona of a wise leader. Leaders who focus on the future, understand choices must be made and who practice sound judgement when dealing with people are truly the prudent leaders we all need.

Judgment, wisdom, discretion, farsightedness— the ever-present qualities of a prudent leader.

3. Justice

We all want and seek justice for ourselves. We want to be treated with fairness, not bias or prejudice. We expect honesty in our leaders, no matter the entity they lead. Integrity is a must.

No leader would be accepted if their behavior and actions are dishonest. We expect truthfulness and transparency in all areas of the organization and we want predictability from our leaders.

"No surprises" is the motto of leaders who seek to cover the culture with justice. Everyone has an opportunity based upon their abilities, not their connections. A just and fair treatment permeates all decisions.

Here I might interject the concept of servant leadership. Justice requires leaders to serve, to help those whose knowledge and/or skills need shoring up to grow their careers. And the servant leader would never block the advancement of an employee because they need them to stay by their side.

A just leader glories in the advancement of their employees because it speaks well of the leader. The just leader provides a work environment where everyone is treated fairly and dealt with in an

honest fashion, and an atmosphere filled with people of integrity. Justice isn't perfect, but leaders need to constantly seek its presence in the workplace.

Fairness, honesty, integrity, truthfulness— outstanding characteristics worthy of just leaders.

4. Fortitude

It's easy to quit. It's much more difficult to keep going when we face tough situations. A marathon runner can't succeed by stopping at 26 miles. It's at this point that fortitude drives and success surfaces.

Fortitude allows one to conquer fear and face life's trials and tribulations. Our strength of character and resilience provides momentum. We gain strength by practicing being strong. We create endurance when our energy is drained but our determination is not stifled. Fortitude makes us courageous in situations where being timid is our natural inclination.

Fortitude is represented in the workplace by the strength we display and practice. In sports we say, *"When the going gets tough, the tough get going."* At work, we can say *"When obstacles seem insurmountable, go around them and continue your forward journey."*

Strength, courage, endurance, resiliency— qualities present in any leader with fortitude.

Well, how did you do? Were these virtues challenging or comforting? Successful leaders look for ways to have the edge on their life's journey. Without doubt, these sound virtues, while potentially challenging and uncomfortable to put in place, are the core of sound leadership.

Billy Arcement is a professional speaker and leadership strategist who works with corporate, education and associations leaders, their employees and members to improve performance. He also offers human performance safety training to his corporate clients. He is a 36-year member of the National Speakers Association. His book *"Searching for Success"* is published internationally. Arcement also co-authored *"Journeying on Holy Ground,"* a book about setting life's priorities.