6 building blocks of leadership

The top qualities you can develop as a leader, says a former commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard:

1. **Decisiveness.** After Hurricane Katrina, Coast Guard personnel were empowered to act independently. When they couldn’t contact FEMA, they went ahead and bought bottled water, billed it to the Coast Guard and delivered more than a million bottles a day.

2. **Integrity.** Of our 56 founders who signed the Declaration of Independence, nearly every one lived up to the pledge of their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor. Nine died in the revolution, two were wounded, five were captured and at least two lost children. Some lost everything, and 18 had their homes looted or burned. Many turned over their fortunes for the cause. Their actions matched their words.

3. **Respect.** The Coast Guard takes responsibility for illegal immigration on the water. Even refugees plucked from makeshift rafts, including those who hurl abuse, must be treated with respect for trying to make a better life. Otherwise, disrespect festers.

4. **Diversity.** A Texas IT company in the early 1990s tried expanding into Italy with a team of 20 white male Texas engineers. Scorned for understanding nothing about Italian business, they withdrew and tried again with a sprinkling of women and Italians in the mix. This time it worked.

5. **Trust.** College basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski, “Coach K,” convinced his team in the final seconds of a 1992 playoff game that they would win by a shot. He gave them a precise plan, had them join hands and declared several times, “We’re going to win.” Because they believed him, they did.

6. **Performance.** Here’s a chestnut: “There are three kinds of people: those who make things happen, those who watch what happens and those who wonder what happened.” Leaders make things happen.


**Random Wisdom**

“The person who knows ‘how’ will always have a job. The person who knows ‘why’ will always be his boss.”

— Diane Ravitch, historian