

The #1 Most Advantageous Leadership Trait I Observed in 2022

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2023 will be a year of where we can all say *the old is gone and the new is here*. Innovators and early adopters already have embraced the new, and 2023 is an opportunity for all of us to press forward.

We might define “old” and “new” differently. In fact, I’m certain there are unique nuances that businesses face within current culture. We therefore require different approaches to organization. But the best response is to press forward into the new and not cling to and get stuck in the past.

2022 was tough on a lot of leaders. For some, 2022 was more difficult than the two previous years. This is because in 2020 & 2021 we were forced to respond to a crisis situation. In 2020 we were flying blind and leading in reaction mode. 2021, in part, required adapting with little time and few choices.

But in 2022 options and choices began to reappear. However, the options were more complex and not always ideal. For example, how should you embrace the hybrid office?

This is what triggered my noticing (and experiencing) that the leaders who possess a **disposition of positivity** seem to make more progress, lead with more hope, and in general, manage stress better.

A positive spirit doesn’t prevent pain or guarantee success, but it establishes the path forward toward the best possible outcomes.

- This is a clear *leadership advantage*.
- This begs the question, “Is having a positive spirit genetic or a choice?”
- Is it natural or can it be learned?
- Yup, the answer is both. That’s good news.

While some leaders come by a disposition of positivity more naturally, and others must invest more intentional effort and energy, for both, it’s still a choice to practice it *consistently*.

The following five biases are ways you can focus your positive outlook, or a way to reverse engineer your leadership toward a disposition of positivity.

1) A bias toward belief

When you meet someone new, what is your most common first reaction? Do you lean slightly toward skeptical or more toward believing the best? That difference truly matters.

Discernment is always important, but people can sense how you feel about them and will always interact better with you if they know you'll give them the benefit of the doubt.

People will rise to the level of your belief in them, even if in the beginning, you believe in them more than they believe in themselves. Believing the best in someone isn't blind faith or dismissing common sense, discernment, and timing. Believing the best gives a person the best opportunity to be their best self.

One example we all can relate to is within our own families. Positive belief backed by truthful and encouraging words always results in better relationships and better lives.

2) A bias toward the future

We should be grateful for what we have learned from the past, but good leaders always keep their eyes focused on the future. The necessity to lean into the future may seem obvious, but all too often leaders hold on to the past. It's not because they don't want to move forward, but more about things like these:

- Not knowing how
- Comfortable with the past
- Difficult to sustain a positive outlook
- Fear of the unknown
- Exhausted from leading change

The first step in leading toward the future is a deep acceptance that you can't go back to what "was". The second step is a willingness to pay the price to press forward.

On the more practical side, what are the two or three methods you need to end in 2023? And what one new or fresh method or would most help move you forward?

You can figure that out in one or two honest and courageous meetings. Then you can decide and take action.

3) A bias toward risk

It's impossible to lead into the future without taking some risks. What risks are you thinking through for the first half of 2023?

The risks we need to take not always grand or dramatic, but they are compounding in nature and help shape courageous and faith-filled leadership. For example, a risk might be a very difficult conversation, likely with conflict, that needs to take place in order to move forward.

If your leadership wiring leans more risk-averse, it's a good idea to have a small team help you with key decisions. A team that includes at least one leader who more readily embraces risk.

One of the most powerful elements of a positive disposition is how strongly that influences the outcome of the risk. It's not a guarantee, but the positive anticipation creates momentum in the right direction.

4) A bias toward action

Second-guessing direction and decision nearly always slows down or lessens the commitment to take action.

When you have a positive outlook on your direction, meaning you have emotionally embraced it, and you therefore have committed to your decision and are prepared to take action, you are poised for progress.

Taking action requires both an intellectual buy-in to the strategy but also a heart level enthusiasm. That is, a positive belief in the plan you make. In short, are you excited about it?! A wait and see disposition or "let's hope this works" never produces the outcome you desire.

Written plans are important, in fact critical to progress, but don't wait for perfection. It's important to take action. Get started. You can make minor corrections and adjustments along the way.

What is one important decision that you've been delaying and it's time to take action?

5) A bias toward completion

A great idea is of no real or lasting value if you never execute it to full completion. Unfinished projects are notorious for derailing the progress of otherwise really good leaders. What is waiting for you to finish in the next 30-60 days?

Unfinished projects, ministries, conversations, and initiatives are:

- A waste of time
- Discouraging
- An ever-present source of nagging to the soul of a leader

It may be better to take a deep breath and just be honest, you're not going to do it. Delete the files, take it off the list and move on! If you are confident that it *needs* to be done, then ask yourself, what is preventing you from completing the project? Tackle that roadblock in the next two weeks.