



HOW TO DEVELOP A LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

What is a leadership philosophy statement?

Crafting a leadership philosophy statement will help you explore, clarify and express your unique orientation to the practice of leadership. In it you may describe your purpose for leading, your style, values, influences and behaviors. Your statement is usually a living document that changes as you gain experience and self-awareness through more challenging projects and assignments. It should help you stand out as the distinctly original leader you are.

Why would I create one?

Your statement can help guide your development, choices, thinking and activities. It forms the foundation for intentional action and future development.

When would I use it?

You might have it ready to share in interviews or in a public profile. It can also be used to support a leadership portfolio that shows preparation, intent, action and impact.

You can also use it as a personal touchstone, revisiting it when you need to refresh your energy, motivation, drive or when you are especially challenged by a situation or problem. Use it as a leadership compass or North Star.



How do I get started?

Your statement can be brief but powerful. Somewhere between a few sentences and a paragraph is usually sufficient to express yourself. If you are having trouble starting, consider these strategies for collecting words, phrases and examples of why and how you lead.

- Make a quick list of words that describe you as a leader (create a word cloud out of these key words and see what they reveal). Include the why, how, when and what of your leadership practice. Specifically, what gets done when you lead and why? Focus on values, actions, behaviors and impact.
- Select an activity or project you led recently and write a sentence or two about what you believe made it successful. Describe both your strategic thinking skills and your ability to manage others. How (specifically) do you get others to see your vision and work toward making it happen?
- Conduct a few short informational interviews with others familiar with your leadership ability. Listen to what they say about your leadership capacity, competencies and skills. What emerges from these interviews is likely to help you clearly and accurately communicate how and why you lead.
- Make a short list of leaders you model yourself after. What qualities do these leaders have that you admire and emulate? List these and see how many of them apply also to you.
- Use a formal assessment tool (such as Gallup Strengths Finder or Meyers Briggs) and use keywords from these assessments to describe yourself. Include these talents and traits in your statement.
- String this collection of words and phrases into a statement that begins...I am a leader who.... (a simple but highly effective start to any personal statement).

It's worth the effort to craft even a few short sentences. Consider this your unique leadership calling card. Just as you would put time and effort into designing a professional business card, your statement will truly set you apart as a thoughtful leader able to skillfully take on new challenges. Personal growth and greater connection with others are always the goals. If you do not have one, consider getting a mentor to help you with this effort. Self-reflection and accepting feedback are themselves critical leadership skills. The activity itself should generate growth and progress.