



Follower Checklist (Preview)

From: Creative WorQs : Leadership Perspectives

Are your followers competent?

Adapting as a leader is driven by internal, interpersonal, environmental, and conditional factors, but the outcome of being adaptable is driven by ability to execute from the business perspective, and the abilities to learn and apply knowledge for scientists.

The critical interpersonal factor of this section is on follower readiness.

Understanding how followers develop and what questions leaders should consider when examining follower competence.

*Below are some example questions that have helped guide leaders when considering follower competence, preparedness, and or readiness. For a deeper understanding of “readiness” consider Blanchard & Hersey’s SLM model.

“Do they know your ‘short-hand’ and your ‘long-hand?’”

Leaders of large organizations often require a great degree of help from assistants, and other strategic support members. It is not uncommon for strategic support members to be responsible for and tasked with maintaining efficiency for their leaders. It is important for leaders to make sure that these members are able to understand and communicate through their “short-hand,” behaviors. In this case short-hand refers to the, typically, passive messaging that allows leaders to express themselves and be understood in a way that is brief, fluid, but theoretically clear to strategic support members. Followers who understand a leader's short-hand are more valuable to leaders if their ability to understand it facilitates efficiency for their leader(s). Long-hand, on the other-hand*, refers to the messaging that a leader uses to communicate official organizational developments, provide as guidelines for projects, tasks, and performance expectations, and encompass how a leader communicates in an official capacity across those inside and outside the organization. Although not necessarily good-form, many leaders ensure that strategic support members can communicate on their behalf in a way that they would intend to endorse.

“Do they understand how to discern serious from ‘not as’ serious work demands?”

From the practitioner perspective it is important to remember how and what many organizational leaders place importance on, in terms of work demands, varies. Work demands considered serious or less serious are generally impacted by time, execution difficulty, resources needed, level of manifestation & implementation, and risk. However, if we consider leaders from a strategic perspective, we must consider how other personalized and profit-focused factors impact the level of severity for specific work demands. If the success of a work demand impacts a leader’s job security, strategic position, promotional opportunities, perceptions of ROI, or client/customer relations; it is **really** likely to affect how a leader values the work of their followers.

“Do they understand how to facilitate and execute aspects of your role if needed?”

In a similar way to the first question, it is normal for leaders to utilize strategic support members to execute on their behalf for a variety of reasons. However, having followers who are able to facilitate work, work processes, and the other members that fulfill them; is a more nuanced collection of KSAOs that is of great value to leaders, their coworkers, and their organization at large.



“Do they demonstrate their support and loyalty more so through interpersonal attention or work execution?”

For many leaders and followers, the workplace is navigated in two major ways, as they pertain to creating or seizing opportunities for advancement, through work and relationships. The focus of this question centers around those two paths, but also calls into account the importance of leaders being able to recognize strategic support members and members who demonstrate loyalty. Beyond biases such as the well-known, “halo-effect,” it is important to understand how these two buckets overlap, facilitate preferred work outcomes, and in which circumstances are more or less important.

“Do they engage in an ongoing feedback development loop?”

One deeper consideration that falls into understanding this same large competence, is how followers demonstrate their ability, skill, and style in speaking about their own performance. A valuable consideration, that sits well with leaders, is to explore how followers express themselves to leaders about growth, work progress, and problem-solving. It is important to understand the aspects of work that followers mention when talking about their performance. If followers are able to demonstrate that they are taking on leadership feedback, suggesting ideas that drive the efficiency needle forward, and taking personal accountability for their successes/failures, leaders often trust and funnel more responsibilities toward those followers.

“Do they demonstrate a clear understanding of performance expectations?”

In-line with the previous questions, it is also important at all levels of leadership to ensure that members “demonstrate,” their understanding of what is expected (here, in terms of performance). Leaders often forget, themselves, about the details and specifics of work, projects, and facilitatory work processes. The complexity, specificity, perceived importance, and familiarity of certain parameters all impact the explicit and implicit performance expectations. Organizational culture often drives how both types of expectations are communicated, formed, known, and upheld. It is important for leaders to understand how to improve in these areas, understand their own preferences, and understand which followers demonstrate competence to their leaders.



For more information, or the full guide, contact Creative WorQs.