

A Letter to the National Museum

Dear National Museum,

I was so excited to visit your museum last week and tour your Famous American Leaders exhibit. I loved how you included a wide variety of leaders in your exhibit. You talked a lot about how it was important for a leader to be positive. You also talked about how a leader needed to be able to communicate their ideas to other people and get people excited about their ideas. And you spent a lot of time talking about how important it was for leaders to be honest in all they do. However, I felt like you focused on a very narrow set of leadership skills. Let me remind you of a few critical leadership skills that you forgot.

For starters, it's almost impossible to be a good leader if you are unapproachable. People have to feel like they can come up to you and talk to you when you are having trouble. Approachable leaders tend to smile a lot. They avoid using sarcasm. When people bring them bad news, they don't overreact and yell. Instead, they thank people for bringing that information to their attention so they can address it.

Also, strong leaders are positive. According to Brian Tracy, "They see opportunities and possibilities in everything, positive or negative. They look for the good in every situation and in every person." If you are positive, you can help the people you are working with stay motivated and positive. If you are positive, you will attract other people who are positive. If you are positive, you make a better first impression. Many of our strongest leaders do this.

You also neglected the fact that strong leaders tend to be incredibly creative. All across our history, people have had to make decisions that are not so clear-cut. Leaders are asked to do things that have never done before. They have to imagine how different scenarios could go in the future. Think about Benjamin Franklin. Sure, he was a great communicator, but he was also creative. When he was just eleven years old, he loved to swim. However, he knew he could help people swim even better. He invented swim fins, and he tried attaching them to his hands. He invented a kind of sandals you could wear while swimming. They did not work perfectly, but he was willing to try creative solutions to his problem with swimming. This is just one example of a time creativity was important for an American leader.

I hope you will consider revising your museum exhibit to include a wider, more representative sample of leadership traits. If you make revisions to include some of the leadership skills I've detailed above, your exhibit will really teach visitors all the ways they can be leaders, not just a few.

Your loyal visitor,
Sam Johnson