

THE IMPORTANCE OF DETERMINED LEADERS IN A CHANGING WORLD

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The modern world changes every second in countless ways. Innumerable leaders have risen to help organize and lead what can be a chaotic world, but only the determined leaders are able to face the relentless obstacles that our changing world throws at us. This essay utilizes content from Utah Valley University Mastermind speakers to discuss the importance of determination in making exceptional leaders, the various hurdles leaders have to jump through to reach their goal, the necessity of determination in leaders, and how to become a more determined person.

The world is moving and changing at extraordinary speeds. How can we possibly keep up with evolving technology, currency, style, education, laws, health, and paradigms? The truth is, we can't, unless we work together. But how do we, a chaotic, confused, mass of people struggling to find a purpose actually do this together? The answer is: with leaders. As humans, we know we need leaders to keep us straight and working together in an organized manner, but none of us can give a solid and universally accepted definition of what a leader is and should be. I will not attempt to give this type of definition in this essay, but I will argue the importance of one trait that is necessary in leadership in particular. This characteristic is determination. Within this essay I will be relying heavily on speakers from lectures at Utah Valley University, including the UVU Mastermind Lecture Series, which focuses on leadership topics and themes. First, I will define determination in the context of the paper. Then I will discuss others' ideas of what makes a good leader and how it ties in with determination. Lastly, I will discuss

how determination can help leaders push through obstacles and how to become a determined leader.

Determination is a word that usually has a very positive connotation. In a sense it can mean that someone is stubborn, but, for the sake of this paper, I am speaking of determination in a different way. It is a lot like passion. It is an intense and driving feeling. It is what pushes us to get things done and do it to the best of our ability. Without determination we either do not start projects or we finish projects poorly. Our determination in what we do is what makes us unique. It showcases to others what we think is important, what we value in life, and what kind of person we are. Determination, for a leader, is what makes them resolved to make a difference. A leader can't make a difference by sticking to things the world is already doing as that would mean they were only keeping the world the same as it is. However, as we have already discussed above, our world is moving too fast for us to actually keep it the same. All that remains the same is the leader and the people whom they are leading, and they are inevitably left behind if the leader is not determined to make a difference.

So what kind of people are leaders? Some think that leaders are born rather than made over time, but most disagree. Dr. Susan R. Madsen, a leadership and ethics professor, author, and researcher of women and international leaders, says in her speech "Leading Ethically During Complex and Challenging Times" that no matter where you are from, who you are, or what you are doing, you can become a leader. What Madsen (2017) is getting at here is that, whether you are a teacher, parent, CEO, or fast-food worker, you can be a leader in small to big ways that work for you. Tom Krieglstein, who has trained over 227,000 leaders, would agree with this sentiment when he says in his speech "Dance Floor Theory" that everyone has potential. The idea that everyone has potential infers you can come from anywhere and have any different type of worldview and, yet, still become a leader in your own way (Krieglestein, 2017). Madsen's and Krieglstein's ideas are what add to the complexity of what makes a person a leader. However, there is a difference between a leader and a *good* leader. Most successful leaders are continuously learning and always trying to improve (Madsen, 2017). These are truly the determined leaders.

Determined leaders are those who want to make a difference, which means that they need to be willing to change and evolve in order to improve themselves as well as the world around them. Darryl Bosshardt, who works in marketing and business development at Redmond Incorporated, describes good leaders as people who engage and share their knowledge to help enrich lives. In his speech, "Making a Contribution That Matters," he also discusses how being open to new ideas, experiences, and being willing to serve are what make leaders great. Bosshardt is essentially saying that leaders ought to be open to different experiences so they can learn and grow from them in order to better help others also learn and grow. Within determined leadership, not only do the leaders themselves stay determined to make a difference by staying open to new ideas, but they also share those experiences to actually make an impact (Bosshardt, 2016).

Making connections can also make a huge difference according to Kyle A. Reyes, an assistant professor and special assistant for inclusion to the president of Utah Valley University. Reyes (2016) states that being authentic, relevant, and creating a connection can allow you to become an empathetic leader. The key words here are "relevant" and "connect" because to stay relevant and, therefore, impactful within the world, you must be determined to keep moving forward and learning from what is changing around you. Making connections with others and with current events is what allows for determined leaders to keep up and make more significant differences. Professional inspirational speaker and memory expert, Bob Kittell, summarizes this concept perfectly in his "Get Motivated" speech when he says, "Leadership is being able to step it up" (Kittle, 2017). Leaders cannot afford to just relax. They must continually step it up.

The world can be a risky place for determined leaders who are willing to make large leaps forward and make big changes, but the world can be even more dangerous for those who are inflexible, uncertain about the future, or fear change. According to Kai Hence, the Assistant Director for Global Education Initiative at Utah Valley University, those who are the most responsive to change are the people who end up being the most successful, not the people who are merely strong and intelligent (Hence, 2016). Intelligence and strength are certainly good qualities to have, but

if you are not willing to change or are afraid of change, then how smart and strong can you really be? This is why being a determined leader is important. You have to be determined to face these fears in order to truly make a difference. It is important to remember that there is never only one option (Madsen, 2017).

There is always another way, choice, or open door to go through in order to better succeed as a person, group, or society, and this is an important paradigm to have as a determined leader. Judy Gaman, a professional speaker on “passion” and author of *Age to Perfection* and *Stay Young*, describes this idea as well in her *Finding and Developing Your Passion* speech. She described how at first it may seem like there are very few choices, but more become available as we expand our experiences. This idea also ties in with Bosshardt’s idea of how we ought to keep ourselves open to new experiences. So, not only will these experiences aid in our growth, but they will also allow us to see more options and choices (Gaman, 2017).

Another obstacle leaders may face, according to Gaman (2017), is that it can be difficult to find ourselves in a world filled with so many different perspectives, outlooks, and labels. However, it is perfectly alright, and in fact, is recommended, to reinvent ourselves and to not let people define us (Gaman, 2017). A determined leader is someone who will fight past these labels in order to continually know and change themselves however they see fit. This will allow them to better lead others in such a fast-paced world.

Kai Hence reminds us how important it is to communicate with others. A determined leader can benefit significantly from being around different people. Not only will the leader learn more about themselves in relation to others, but they will also learn different ways to work and communicate with other people. As Krieglstein (2017) puts it, “Humans need humans.” By working together, with a strong determined leader at the front, we humans can accomplish practically anything.

How can you become a determined person, though? Leaders such as Hence suggest that you may be following someone else’s path that you do not fully believe in, and so you just have to break off onto your

own path to become more passionate about what you are doing. Gaman (2017) states in her speech that talent, education, and opportunity can always lead to more determination in life. Jobs, people, class, losses, and wins all help us discover what we love and want in life as well, because we are constantly changing and learning as we experience new things. Gaman also reminds us that it takes many steps to get to where we want to go rather than one huge leap, so passion and determination may not come all at once (Gaman, 2016). However, according to Kittell (2017), dreaming big, trying to make what you do fun, and being hungry for the next opportunity also helps. We have to chase after our dreams and be with people who challenge us if we want to become more determined people (Kittle, 2017). Bosshardt (2016) also suggests being resourceful and willing to get your hands dirty. Being tenacious and thinking about what makes you feel strong can help you find your passion and determination in life (Bosshardt, 2016). Anyone can follow these suggestions in order to become a more determined leader.

A determined and passionate leader is more likely to be trusted and followed than one who is uncertain and hesitant. Determination is what is going to push a leader through all of the obstacles and barriers listed in the previous paragraphs. Leaders who are determined can keep up with the changing world, be flexible so they can reach their goals, be more willing to search for more options when it seems like they only have one choice, and engage with other people so they know better how to be helpful. If leaders are not determined or passionate in what they do, others may think they don't actually care about what they are doing. This is why determined leaders are so important, especially in a changing world.

Our world may try to push us down and throw us for loops as we struggle to keep up with the various advancements and progressions in society, but determined leaders are the people who can lead us through the chaos and down the right path. Anyone can be a leader, but not everyone can be a great leader. Although there are many things that can create good leaders, determination is what makes the difference when it comes to facing difficult times. Determined leaders will rise up despite what the world has to say. They will conquer obstacles head on, search for new ways to reach their goal, and search for the people who they know can grow alongside them. This is why determined leaders are vital in our developing world.

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