

Characteristics of Innovative Leaders

1. **Fast and action oriented.** Speed, responsiveness, and agility are everything to innovative leaders who analyze situations, make decisions and act on opportunities. *They find reasons and shortcuts to slash red tape.*
2. **Immersed in progressive change.** Innovative leaders build organizations and foster a culture of on-going, never-ending change. They ensure that their organizations continually learn, adapt, evolve, and improve.
3. **Future-obsessed.** The beckoning horizon ahead excites them. These leaders visualize their organization's future and plot its course. They're always asking, "What next?" "Where else?"
4. **Masters of motivation and inspiration.** Vanguard leaders first get people excited, then committed, and finally moving swiftly. These leaders accomplish two overwhelmingly important things: they make people feel good about themselves and they make them feel good about what they're accomplishing.
5. **Passionate.** Innovative leaders are incredibly driven. And that rubs off on their followers. They express emotions freely and showcase their excitement about new ideas and change.
6. **Super-salespeople and evangelists.** The secret of innovative leadership is not authority, but influence and loyalty. Innovative leaders persuasively communicate an optimistic, bright, enticing picture of the future for their followers. They're "dream merchants." They keep the dream alive by referring to the grand vision or goal at every opportunity.
7. **Rule breakers.** The only rule they have is, "There are no rules." Bureaucratic thinking, even in small organizations, focuses on strictly (oftentimes "blindly") following rules, regulations, methods, procedures, formulas, policies, and playing it safe. Innovative leaders get followers to discard their policy and procedures' manuals and, instead, create common sense, flexible, and ethical guidelines to creatively operate.
8. **Mountain climbers.** What do Alexander the Great and Eckard Pfeiffer, CEO of Compaq Corporation, have in common? Both got their "troops" conquering more territory by repeatedly giving them challenging battles to fight and mountains to climb. By creating on-going inspiring short-term visions and galvanizing followers to rush toward them, innovative leaders will keep interest and motivation peaked at all times.
9. **Opportunists.** Innovative leaders aggressively seek out and grab ideas and opportunities before others are even aware of their existence. They're always asking themselves questions like, "How does 'this' apply to my organization?" "How can I use it or get ideas from it?"
10. **Builders.** You can't build good products in poor factories. The factory of creativity is the organization's culture and operating climate. A major role of the leader is to create an environment where imagination, smart risk-taking, aggressive initiatives, and bold tactics are encouraged and rewarded.
11. **High-gain risk-takers.** You won't find innovative leaders thinking small. Their plans are grandiose; their actions big and daring. They seek large gains and aren't afraid to take smart calculated risks. These are people who create industries and fortunes, not by cautiously holding back, but by boldly leaping far ahead of the average crowd.

Innovative leadership is the highest form of leadership because of the huge contributions made in the lives of employees, customers, and community. *Innovative leaders take their companies to far away, exciting destinations.*

President Dwight Eisenhower said, "You do not lead by hitting people over the head—that's assault, not leadership."

Our difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from **old** ones. — John Maynard Keynes (Economist 1883-1946)

The STRENGTH of a leader is measured by his ability to facilitate the **self**-leadership of others. (Unknown)