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Common Denominators of Great Leadership

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ROME, ITALY

Excerpts from: *When Courage was the Essence of Leadership: Lessons from History*

There could be many interpretations of what a great leader must be. Some prominent leaders and thinkers have said: The price of greatness is responsibility.

— Winston Churchill, former British Prime Minister

To lead people, walk beside them ... As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honor and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate ... When the best leader's work is done the people say, "We did it ourselves!"

— Lao Tzu, Chinese philosopher

All of the great leaders have had one characteristic in common: it was the willingness to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time. This, and not much else, is the essence of leadership.

—John Kenneth Galbraith, Economist

Leadership must be based on goodwill. Goodwill does not mean posturing and, least of all, pandering to the mob. It means obvious and wholehearted commitment to helping followers. We are tired of leaders we fear, tired of leaders we love, and tired of leaders who let us take liberties with them. What we need for leaders are men of the heart who are so helpful that they, in effect, do away with the need of their jobs. But leaders like that are never out of a job, never out of followers. Strange as it sounds, great leaders gain authority by giving it away.

— Admiral James B. Stockdale, President of the U.S. Naval War College

Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument, debate, and doubt to offer a solution everybody can understand.

— General Colin Powell, former US Secretary of State

Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees the others.

— Aristotle

Courage is the first step. Once the journey begins, other qualities have to come to bear if one is to be a "great leader" — a term used frequently. What is great leadership?

Great leaders make significant, positive, and permanent differences in the lives of people and institutions, and stand as symbols of justice, fairness, strength, honesty, integrity, and courage.

— Emilio Iodice

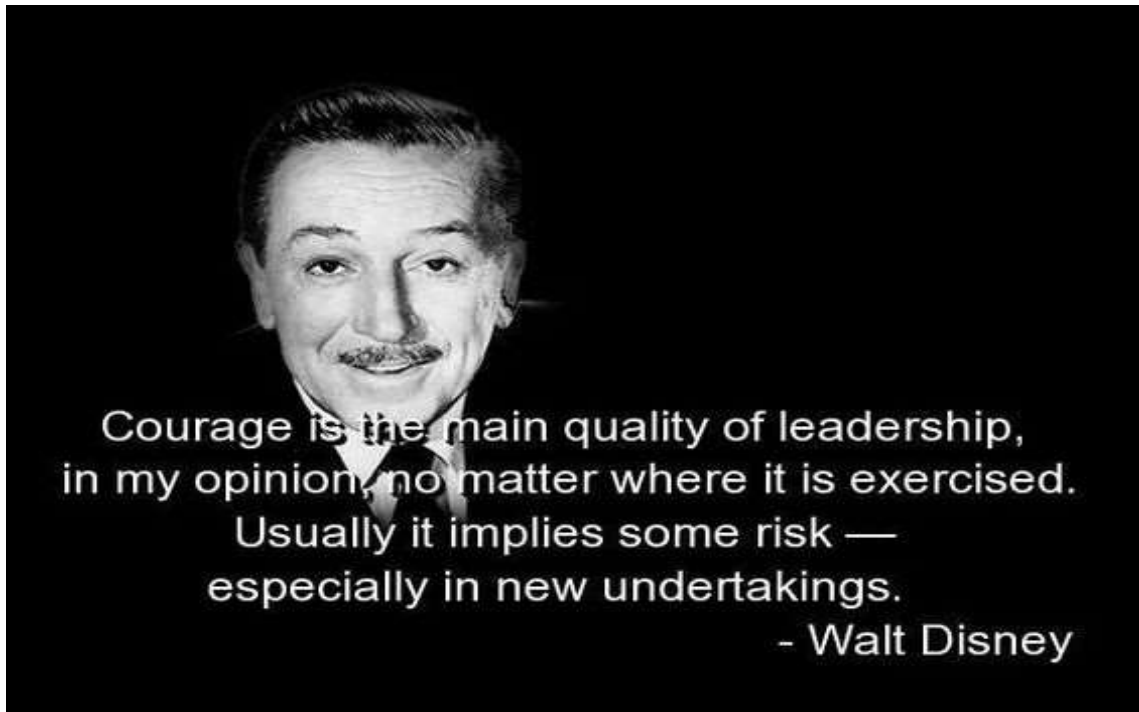
The impact of great leaders transcends time. We will use the examples of Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar, Napoleon, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Eleanor Roosevelt, Margaret Thatcher, and Oprah Winfrey to explain the key qualities of great leaders. They span over 2000 years. They represent the experience of the ages. Each left a historic legacy.

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

— Nelson Mandela

One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest.

— Maya Angelou



Courtesy Pinterest, <https://it.pinterest.com/pin/292522938270529442/> pbs.twimg.com

Heroes represent the best of ourselves, respecting that we are human beings. A hero can be anyone from Gandhi to your classroom teacher, anyone who can show courage when faced with a problem. A hero is someone who is willing to help others in his or her best capacity.

— Ricky Martin



Julius Caesar, Louvre Museum, Paris, France

It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.

— E. E. Cummings

Julius Caesar's absence of self-control prevented him from doing more to achieve leadership greatness. He lacked self-discipline to master his ego. This led to his downfall. If he had lived and restrained his ambition, he may have attained his many dreams for Rome and its people.



The Death of Caesar, 44 BC, by Vincenzo Camuccini, *Museum of Modern Art of Modena*

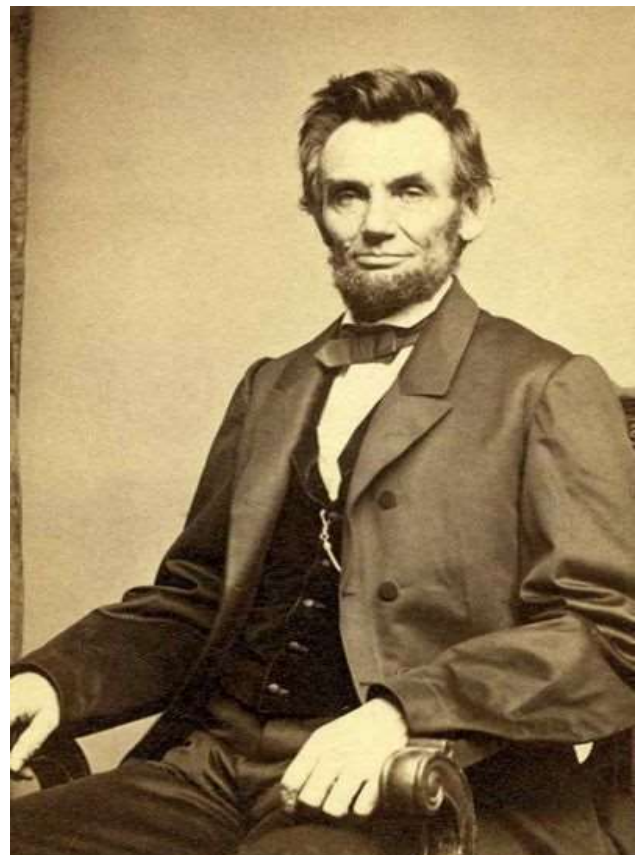
Augustus reached prominence with the opposite qualities of his illustrious uncle. His was a life of discipline shaped by powerful emotional intelligence. It was not perfect, but it resulted in an era of peace and brought Roman civilization to new heights.



Augustus of Prima Porta, *Vatican Museum*

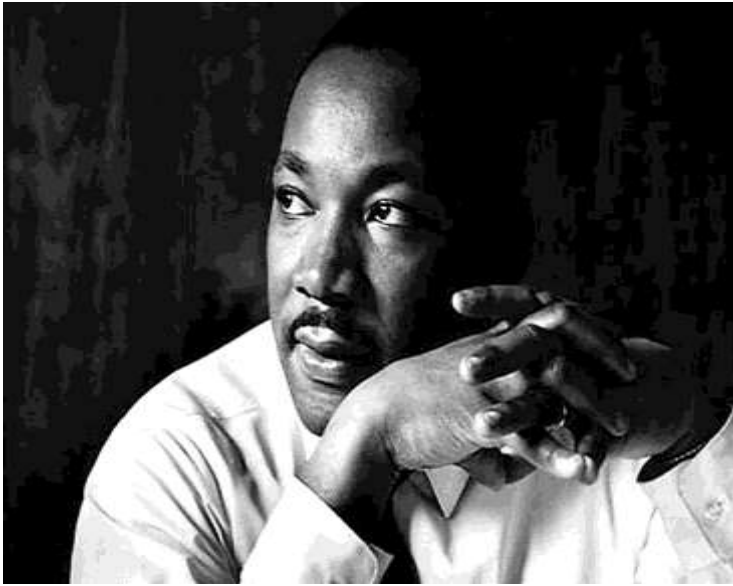


Napoleon à Toulon (1793), *Edouard Detaille*



Abraham Lincoln by Mathew Brady, *Library of Congress*

Napoleon was an extraordinary general. He inspired men and the people of France to follow him. He is still revered. Yet his urge to conquer and attain personal and national glory destroyed his ability to realize more for his country and Europe. The blood of the millions who perished in the “Napoleonic” wars erased much of his legacy.



Dr. Martin Luther King, *Time Magazine*

Lincoln was a “great leader” in the complete sense of the term. His examples of leadership, his attributes, his personal and professional triumphs, stand by themselves as a benchmark for others to aspire to. He demonstrated his abilities again and again and did so in a context of humility. Martin Luther King shared this distinction.

Like Lincoln, Dr. King had conviction, courage and wisdom, and the ability to communicate. Had he lived longer, he would have done more for all of mankind.

His death, like that of Lincoln’s, made them martyrs, models, symbols and icons as leaders who carry us to greatness. They were ready to die for social justice.



Eleanor Roosevelt, *Courtesy, the White House*

Such was the case with Eleanor Roosevelt. She took risks. She would have been a first-rate leader even if she was not the wife of a president. She had the marks of greatness. Most of all, Eleanor Roosevelt was not afraid. She took stands for unpopular causes. She was thoughtful, articulate and determined. Her compassion and courage were matched by consistency, strength of character and a drive to succeed.



British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, *Chris Collins of the Margaret Thatcher Foundation*

Margaret Thatcher shared some of these talents. She, like Eleanor, climbed mountains to overcome the prejudice against women who wanted to lead.

Oprah Winfrey had to break through the obstacles of poverty, race and gender. She grew up in a poor family. Like Dr. King, she overcame her challenges and proved that a black woman could lead with strength, wisdom and dignity and become one of the wealthiest persons on the planet.



Oprah Winfrey, *photo by Alan Light*

The “common denominators of great leaders” are characteristics

that *last the test of time*. They cross the ages. They are the benchmarks:

- **Strong Emotional Intelligence and Self Discipline:** Great leaders have self-control and self-discipline. They are driven by integrity and not ego. We call it “emotional intelligence.” They manage their sense of self-esteem. They do not let it control their decisions. They stress humility, reflect carefully, study, and analyze. When they do not, they fail, no matter what their past successes were. Napoleon and Julius Caesar, for instance, could not keep their pride in check.



Martin Luther King Jr. and Eleanor Roosevelt, Tribute to Dr. King, US Embassy, New Delhi, India

Arrogance overcame them.

The most able leaders set the example they, “walk the walk and talk the talk.” Trust is earned not given. It comes from being sincere, and showing constant self-control. A leader who lacks character, is dishonest, and has weak ethical values, soon loses support. If, on the other hand, a leader is impeccably honest, then they are never afraid of even the worst enemies.

J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, kept files on Eleanor Roosevelt and Martin Luther King. Neither one was frightened. They could not be blackmailed.

Nothing in those files was true or so damning as to overshadow their greatness.

On the other hand, those who betray the public trust face extortion and disaster. A powerful political leader, for example, who has sexual exploits or is perceived as corrupt, could be extorted by a nation's enemies. They could be forced to reveal secrets, commit crimes, and make decisions that could destroy the country to hide the truth. Such a situation could weaken democracy and the faith of the people in its leaders. The discipline of emotional intelligence matched with a moral compass prevents this from happening.

Emotional intelligence deals with strength of mind in decision-making. Strong leaders are calm in the storm. They have character and control as their guide. Before Lincoln acted on an impulse of anger, he would write a letter to the person or to himself. He would read it and then discard it when his feelings had subsided. He kept control of his emotions.

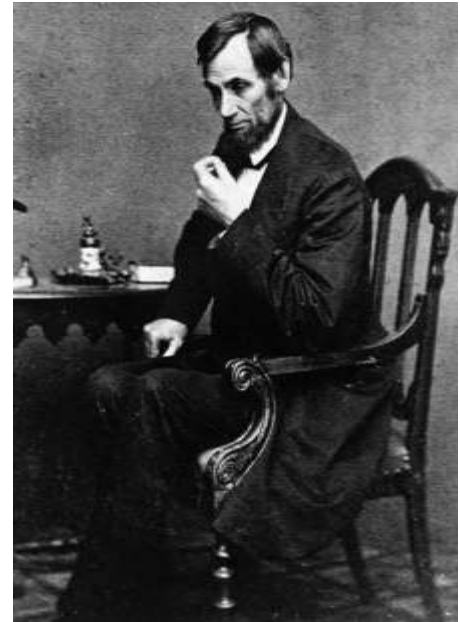
Eleanor Roosevelt's stirring radio address to the women of America after the attack on Pearl Harbor showed understanding, trust, willpower, and determination in the face of tragedy. In battle, Napoleon climbed over the dead to lead his troops forward.



Eleanor Roosevelt, Courtesy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library

Leadership requires making tough choices and decisions that are not always popular. Lincoln faced constant pressure and criticism from within his government and leaders in society to change course. He kept his composure, even at the risk of losing his bid for re-election.

When things appeared to be catastrophic, Lincoln was able to put them in the proper context and make reasonable choices. He made his decisions with reflection and used time as an ally. His serenity and optimism through the tempests of the Civil War gave comfort and courage to those around him. “Fresh off the farms,” as he described them, he refused to execute young boys caught in the maelstrom of the conflict when they deserted. Instead, he pardoned them.



Abraham Lincoln, *Library of Congress*



Prime Minister Thatcher during the Falklands War, *Courtesy, Thatcher Foundation*

Augustus baffled his enemies with his restraint and mastery over his sentiments. Margaret Thatcher was called “The Iron Lady” for her steadfastness and unwavering adherence to her principles. She showed fortitude in applying her reforms. She reined in her emotions as she guided Britain through the Falklands War. She viewed her position as prime minister as a means to an end, not an end in itself. She used her power and role to get things done,

not bolster her ego. Oprah Winfrey did not let racial prejudice and the fact she was a woman hold her back in rising to become an actress and impresario, creating jobs for thousands in her industry. Her emotional intelligence included a strong sense of optimism and thinking in terms of possibilities vs. problems.

Emotional intelligence also involves thinking like a leader. The leader’s mind is like the wheel on a ship guided by the captain. Not all have the aptitude to lead. Not all have the mental strength, intuition, and drive to lead others. Some are better followers. The mindset to lead often shows up early in life.

Oprah Winfrey knew she was meant to lead, from when she was a little girl. She was ambitious. She was comfortable leading. As a young lady, Eleanor discovered her ability and willingness to lead when she saw the slums of New York. She knew someone had to take a stand to make a change. Napoleon certainly had the capacity and mindset to lead others. As a boy, a young cadet and an officer, he took charge at every opportunity. He showed this on the battlefield and in the courts of kings.

- **Personal Presence:** A leader must be engaged with those they lead. This deals with constituents, customers, and followers.



Lincoln with the troops, *photo by Mathew Brady*

Lincoln visited his cabinet heads, stayed with the troops, and was on the battlefield. He went to Richmond immediately after the treaty was signed to end the war to sit in the chair of Jefferson Davis. He did not cheer or gloat over victory. He was there as a symbol to those who fought, died, and sacrificed. He represented compassion, understanding, and a singular commitment to the ideals that were struggled over. Napoleon and Caesar lived with their men. Eleanor Roosevelt visited soldiers and sailors in the theatres of war. She went into the coal mines to strive for workers' rights, attended civil rights meetings, and confronted those who blocked legislation to stop lynching and who slowed down the struggle for social justice.

Eminent leaders are personally present and upfront. They show they are in command. They meet with their teams and interest groups. Personal presence is the key. Presidents, prime ministers, celebrities, and captains of industry and business, portray a persona for those they command and those who look to them as models. All eyes are on them. Leaders need to be cognizant of living in a "fishbowl." Their lives and personal conduct must reflect the sincerity of their words and actions.

By being personally engaged with their teams, great leaders help develop their subordinates into



Vercingetorix surrenders Caesar during the Gallic Wars, by Lionel Royer, *Wikimedia Commons*.

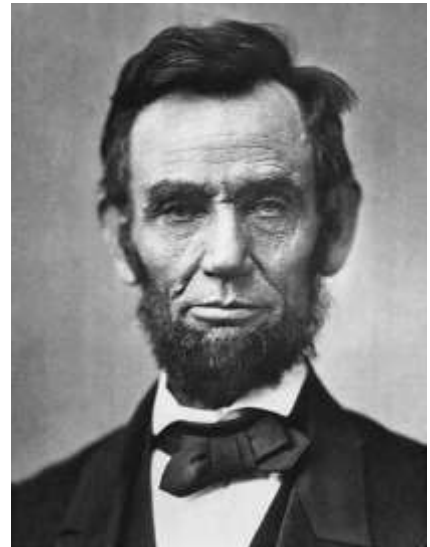
future leaders. They gain loyalty and respect. Napoleon wanted his soldiers to bring him problems and solutions. He relished in resolving difficulties directly with them. Great leaders are accessible and available. When associates stop doing this, then the leader no longer leads.

- **Taking Responsibility:** Responsibility is the essence of leadership. Great leaders take it on willingly. They believe they

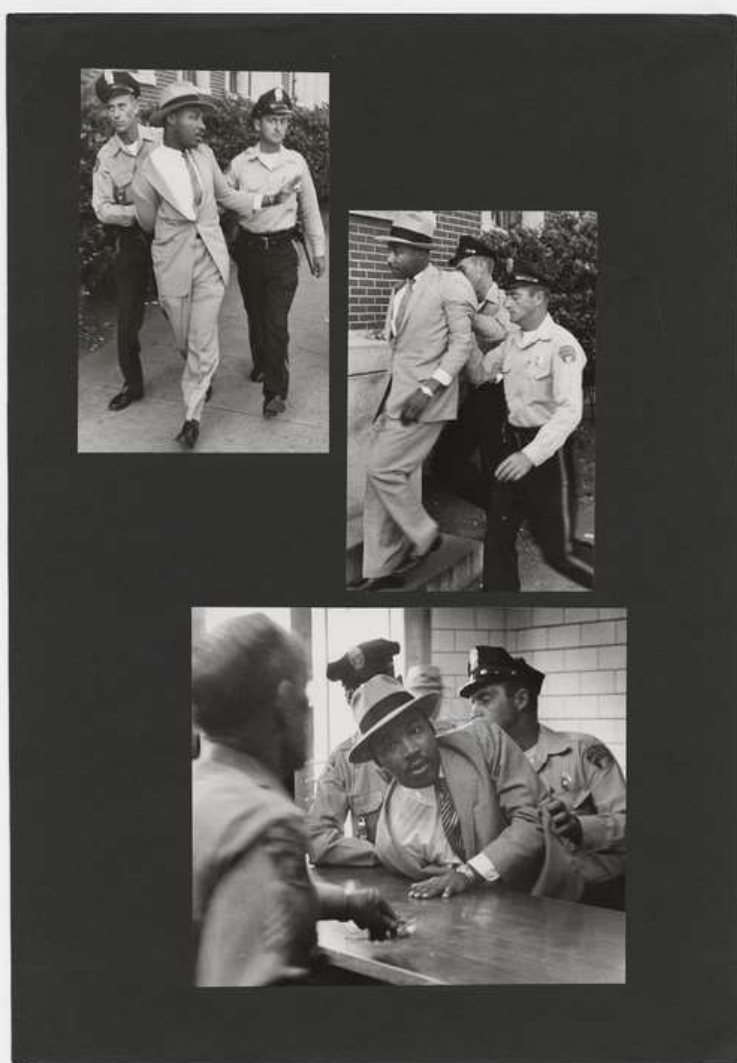
can handle the risks of responsibility better than others. Extraordinary leaders demonstrate that the decisions they make are theirs. False leaders fool themselves and those who trust them when they shirk their duty or pass blame on to others. Napoleon was a general in his twenties. He commanded armies with officers twice his age. He was not afraid of responsibility. He relished it.

Caesar conquered Gaul and ruled Rome. He led, fought, and governed with a sense of tenacity and responsibility to the Romans and those who followed him.

Lincoln took on the burdens of the Civil War as a personal crusade to preserve the Union and save the values that were the foundation of America. Eleanor Roosevelt felt her causes were part of her makeup as a person and a citizen of the United States and of the world. She believed she had a responsibility to speak out and fight no matter what the personal consequences could be. Women looked to her as their standard bearer and pioneer for equality.



Abraham Lincoln, *Library of Congress*



Martin Luther King arrested in Montgomery Alabama, December 1956, *Courtesy, International Center of Photography*

Martin Luther King did not shun duty in the face of police brutality and death threats. He stood out in the forefront like a shield to protect the values of impartiality for all people. Margaret Thatcher was not afraid to take the lead of her party and become the first woman to head a major political movement in the United Kingdom and the first woman to be Prime Minister of England. She knew she had an obligation to the citizens of her country and to women who emulated her. Oprah became a representative for African American women and all women who overcame obstacles to have the chance to use their talents.

Prominent leaders take their sense of responsibility seriously. They lead downward by overseeing those below; upward by responding, listening, and influencing superiors; laterally with peers; and inwardly by caring for their mind and spirit. Lincoln read the scriptures; Oprah did meditation exercises. In each case the mental and spiritual leadership helped the leader listen to their inner voice.

- **Being Passionate:** Napoleon and Caesar led with vigor and passion.

Oprah's enthusiasm was contagious. Those who came in contact with her sensed her energy and enthusiasm. Exceptional leaders set a tone of excitement. It springs from the heart. They enjoy

the experience so much that they make it look easy.

Margaret Thatcher held onto her principles. She pursued them energetically. She enjoyed being prime minister and showed it. She led because she knew she was capable.



Abraham Lincoln, Lincoln Memorial, *National Park Service*

them that their cause was just. That nonviolence was the proper method and that courage, enthusiasm, and passion, would overcome evil.

People want to understand what a leader seeks to accomplish and whether the leader has the fervor to carry out their dreams. Napoleon was clear in what he set out to achieve. He promised to bring order to France. He swore he would defend the ideals of the Revolution. He carried his pledge to establish stability with zeal. He protected the principles of the Revolution with fury on the battlefield and in the French court with cunning and fervor.

- **Ambitious:** Remarkable leaders are ambitious. They seek power. It gives them the tools they need to lead. They inspire others to excel. Their ambition is infectious. It helps draw the most talented to them. Some experts on leadership claim it is one of the innate qualities of leadership. They view ambition as a part of one's DNA.

Caesar had a powerful desire to be in command, even in his youth. Napoleon certainly believed he was destined to rule.



Roman Bust of Julius Caesar, *Museum of Naples*

He felt comfortable leading at an early age. He was also audacious. He was not troubled by danger. He often acted first, and sought permission later. Napoleon rarely asked for approval. If he was not explicitly denied the right to take charge of a situation, he went forward and did what he felt was necessary.

Lincoln was a man of ambition. He kept moving forward, to seek positions of higher responsibility even in the face of failure. Oprah Winfrey claimed that her desire to achieve started as a little girl. Her grandmother and her teachers encouraged her to excel. Margaret Thatcher inherited her go-getting from her father. He was her guide and mentor. Eleanor Roosevelt

Lincoln's passionate words sunk deep into the American psyche. He spoke about "a house divided" to show the folly of slavery and inequality. He reminded the people of the ideals that created the American experiment of democracy. With passion, he pleaded that we, "bind up the nation's wounds," after the great conflict that tore apart the country.

Martin Luther King showed optimism and passion in leading his people to fight for equal rights. He convinced



Napoleon at the Pont d'Arcole, by Baron Antoine-Jean Gros, (ca. 1801), *Musée du Louvre, Paris*

knew political power would allow her to battle for her causes. She helped her husband pursue his aspirations so that she could pursue her own.

- **Creating a Brain Trust of the Best and Brightest Followers:** No one can lead alone. Superb leaders constantly search for talent. They seek those with skills to complement those they do not have. They look for the ability to decide as well as anticipate. They want disciples who are intelligent, have a sense of loyalty and integrity; followers who control their ego and have energy. Outstanding leaders discover blossoming leaders. They search for those who led in childhood experiences; those who were team captains, distinguished themselves in school, took initiatives, and showed signs of leadership in youth.



Lincoln presents the first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet. *Painted by Francis Bicknell Carpenter in 1864, Library of Congress*

managers run the engine room. Both get the ship to port.

Notable leaders avoid surprises. They do not kill messengers. Instead, they encourage them to present facts, explain what they do not know, give advice, and be able to differentiate among each point they describe.

Augustus was young, but wise. He surrounded himself with experienced followers who helped him bring peace and stability to Rome. He trusted his lieutenants and based his choices on logic and evidence. Caesar sought the best military men he could find to join his armies. He trained them in his methods and standards. Oprah selected the finest talent to organize her programs and many enterprises. She empowered them to do their jobs with

Abraham Lincoln was not concerned about asking his political rivals to join his cabinet. He wanted the best possible leaders to help him govern. Experienced leaders are not impressed with long resumes or advanced degrees. Instead, they hunt for individuals who have strong ethical standards, equilibrium, a determination to achieve, vitality, and skills. They train them to bring solutions to problems and not be afraid to tell the truth. Exceptional leaders know the difference between managing and leading. Leaders set and plot the course;



Maecenas Presenting the Liberal Arts to Emperor Augustus, *Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Hermitage Museum*

creativity and independence.

Napoleon had a knack for discovering exceptional people. He searched for individuals with capacities to help him win. As Caesar rose to power, he sought out those who had influence in Rome and cultivated them. He created a network. He knew the persons who held sway over the Senate, the bureaucracy and the army. He garnered their support.

Eleanor Roosevelt was a mentor for exceptional people. She helped them advance in their careers and did not hesitate to sponsor them for important jobs in the New Deal. Lincoln cultivated and sought out talent, especially in the military sphere. He wanted to end the war as quickly as possible. He needed strong, intelligent, determined officers to do so. He kept searching until he found them.



- **Showing Sensible Courage:** Courage, as we have said, is the first step to great leadership. It has to be approached directly but with common sense. Leadership brings risks. Lincoln and Martin Luther King lost their lives for their beliefs. Eleanor Roosevelt and Margaret Thatcher risked theirs. They continued forward, in the face of threats. They had to make choices. To shrink from responsibility, for the sake of safety, would have destroyed the citadel of beliefs they had constructed. Instead, with their example, they inspired others to be brave and fight for justice. Napoleon faced death many times. In each case, his valor helped spur his followers on to attain new heights. Courage is contagious.

- **Demonstrating Fairness and Compassion:** Leaders are constantly tested with thorny decisions. Balancing impartiality and compassion with decisiveness is not easy. Experience and values come into play. How does one rule with strength and determination, yet with integrity and even handedness? One could ask, for example, in the face of a management or political decision, what would Lincoln or Martin Luther King do? For a moral decision, what would Christ, Moses, or Buddha do? Great leaders have a “moral compass” which they use to make the most difficult choices.



Rabbi Hillel the Elder, *Courtesy, the Free Social Encyclopedia*

At times the “Golden Rule” helps. Rabbi Hillel was asked to sum up the wisdom of the Torah. He said, “That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow.” “What you do not wish for yourself,” said Confucius, “do not do to others.” This does not prevent the great leader from choosing. It provides a better framework for choices. Amazing leaders realize they are serving others, in one form or another. They serve as guides and mentors to followers and provide services to their institutions, customers, and constituents.

- **Working Closely with Subordinates:** The best leaders carefully match the capabilities of their people with the tasks at hand. Once their players are in place, they provide trust and faith in their abilities. They give them direction and stimulate dialogue, openness, and transparency. They view them as primary assets. The finest leaders see those who work with them as fertile soil to be cultivated and nourished and not as “dirt.” They view their expertise as building blocks for the future. Great leaders study the human capital of an organization. They connect skills with needs, recruit the best they can find and then become people focused. Lincoln knew the names of all those who worked with him and the names of their spouses and children. He showed sincere

concern for their welfare.

Effective leaders take their teams to higher levels of attitude by capitalizing on and emphasizing strengths, as opposed to weaknesses. Martin Luther King knew his flock. He was close to those who were with him in protests and in marches. He had amazing people skills. He met with families and spoke with children. He not only preached to his assembly, he engaged them in his causes. They became their causes. He gave them hope, encouragement, and courage to persist, even in the face of violence. He saw each person as a child of God, even his enemies.



Martin Luther King Jr. marched with leaders including Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, in Selma, Alabama in 1965. *Courtesy, Associated Press*

Followers crave involvement with leaders. They must know their leaders are interested in their work and point of view and not feel manipulated. Excellent leaders create fair evaluation methods that have rewards and ways to improve built into a system of checks and balances and personal and professional development. Superior leaders grow their associates, so that they can implement change. Leadership is all about change. Eleanor Roosevelt knew this. She strove to help women bring out their talents and become leaders. Even during the Great Depression, she did her utmost to encourage women to work and study and take on responsibility. She challenged them to leave their comfort zones and become more fulfilled human beings.

Splendid leaders are not micromanagers, by any means. They empower their team. They meet, talk, and discuss regularly the progress made on their shared vision. Margaret Thatcher worked with her team constantly and consistently. She consulted with them. She used their advice to both advance her agenda and to advance politically.

Napoleon had a few close aides that he worked with constantly. They resolved tactical and strategic issues by discussions. Lincoln spent hours with Secretary Seward. They told stories and jokes in an atmosphere of mutual admiration and trust. At the same time, he dealt with the nation's business and protected America's interests. The most memorable leaders show affection and interest in people as individuals and members of a larger community, working for a common cause.

- **Staying Close to the People:** Just as politicians need to be close to those who elect them, business and institutional leaders need to know their customers, stakeholders, stockholders, and whomever or whatever the constituency is from which they derive their power. Exceptional leaders realize they are servants. They serve the people who employ them, those who work with them and trust them. They are concerned about what they can do for others, not for themselves. Lincoln met with people from all walks of life, every day. They asked for help, jobs, favors, or a chance to tell their story. He was approachable and humble and portrayed an image and spirit of service to others.

As Napoleon amassed power, he became detached from the people. He delegated to subordinates the close connection with those who believed in him. He had a growing "palace

guard” that helped him lose touch with facts and truth. He became unapproachable. This accelerated his decline.



Eleanor and Franklin, *Courtesy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library*

Eleanor Roosevelt was engaged in local politics around the country, during the New Deal, and in New York in her later years. She was constantly on the road. She travelled everywhere to give her message and meet with people of all walks of life. She saw herself as serving the underdogs and the downtrodden. She fought for their rights. She struggled to give them a voice. Margaret Thatcher was close to her electorate. She had high approval ratings and was elected three times as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

Oprah Winfrey had millions of fans. She stayed in touch with them via her online site, her book club and programs. Her books of famous quotations; her television programs and advice from her magazine brought her into the homes of her audience and fans.

- **Persistence:** Great leaders never give up. They convey long-lasting assurance, even in the face of disappointment. Optimism from a leader is contagious. It ripples throughout the organization.

Lincoln had personal and political setbacks, yet he continued to voice his



Election poster, campaign of Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin, 1860, *Library of Congress*

opinions and fight for his principles with a strong, positive attitude.

Eleanor Roosevelt needed the “skin of a rhinoceros,” as she said, to deal with criticism, lies, and disillusionments. Even so, she strove to bring fruition to her causes, no matter how difficult the road was to get there. She did so with good cheer, a sense of humor and humility.

Distinguished leaders are persistent. Impediments do not stop them. Lincoln faced constant challenges from his cabinet and his officers and the Congress. He dealt with disagreement as if it was part of the human spirit and a celebration of individuality. He confronted lies directly. When prominent politicians challenged the loyalty of Mrs. Lincoln, he confronted them. He listened to their point of view. He asked questions and answered those posed to



Eleanor Roosevelt, *Courtesy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library*

him calmly. He did so with facts, sincerity, feeling, and candor. He demonstrated that Mary Todd Lincoln was a patriot and was at his side, fighting to end the Civil War.

Few leaders could be as persistent as Napoleon. He rose to power by being tenacious and bold. He was tireless in the quest of his aims.

Margaret Thatcher lost elections before she achieved a place in Parliament. Discrimination did not stop her from reaching the highest level of British politics. Oprah failed at times. She explained how each failure gave her more courage to triumph as a woman, an African American and an entrepreneur.

- **Decision Making Based on Facts:** Abraham Lincoln was in the telegraph room of the White House nearly every day. There, he got the latest information on the battles won and lost in the Civil War. He asked questions and searched for data and truth before making life and death decisions. Excellent leaders are great simplifiers. They do so with facts. They are not afraid to decide.

Napoleon was rigorous in checking and double-checking information to ensure accuracy before acting. He mastered the art of intelligence. At times, leaders cannot have all the data they demand. This is where instinct and common sense come into play. Margaret Thatcher rarely decided without specifics. She became an expert on the budget of the U.K., so she could understand government expenditures with particulars and fine points. At times, she made decisions without perfect data because she had the experience to go in the right direction.



Emperor Napoleon by David, *Louvre Museum*

Napoleon was a spellbinding speaker. He matched his capacity to communicate with courage. When Napoleon escaped from exile, the King of France sent an army to destroy him. He met the French army that was sent to destroy him. He went directly to them, alone and unarmed.



Margaret Thatcher on the cover of *Time*, 1979, *Courtesy, Time Magazine*

- **Communication:** The role of language is essential to leadership. History's greatest leaders were great communicators. They used the tools of their times. Caesar was an author and orator. Martin Luther King was magnificently eloquent. His messages were consistent and clear. He wrote in ways all could understand. He spoke for all people and for posterity. Few could match the volume of Eleanor Roosevelt's communications. The hundreds of thousands of pages of messages, letters, columns, books, radio addresses, and countless speeches around the world helped her lead with her voice and pen. Millions understood her dreams of fair mindedness for America and the world.




Napoleon's Return from Elba, by Charles Auguste Guillaume Steuben

message. It must be memorable. They know their audience and must speak from the mind, the heart, and the soul.

“Napoleon continued to walk on, to within easy range of the guns. ‘Soldiers, I am your emperor. Know me! If there is one of you who would kill his Emperor, here I am,’ he exclaimed. He threw open his famous grey greatcoat, inviting a shot. It was more than the government soldiers could bear; they abandoned their weapons and ran towards the invaders, shouting ‘Vive l’Empereur!’”¹

Skillful leaders communicate with followers, clients, and constituents. They craft their



We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

(Abraham Lincoln)

izquotes.com

Courtesy, IZ Quotes, <http://izquotes.com/>

In his Second Inaugural Address, Lincoln knew his people were exhausted from the conflict. They wanted peace. Some wanted revenge. With remarkable courage, he appealed to the “better angels” of his countrymen to “bind up the nation’s wounds” and care for those who suffered on both sides. His words reached deep into the souls of all involved in the War. He conveyed to them a vision of what would follow and appealed to their virtues of compassion and understanding to achieve a lasting peace based on reconciliation.

- **Visionary Thinking:** Great leaders project their goals to followers, friends, and enemies. They are not afraid to publicly explain the path they are pursuing. They do it with clarity and simplicity and assurance. Sculptors see the figures in the marble, long before they begin to chisel away at

¹ Gifford, J. (19 March 2011). *Leadership and courage: Napoleon returns from exile in Elba*. Retrieved from <http://jonathangifford.com/leadership-and-courage-napoleon-returns-from-exile-in-elba/>

A large black and white photograph capturing a massive crowd of people participating in a march on Washington, D.C. The participants, a mix of men and women of various ages, are filling a wide street lined with trees. Many individuals are carrying large, rectangular signs with bold, black text. Visible slogans include "WE MARCH FOR JOBS NOW!", "END SEGREGATED RULES", "PUBLIC SCHOOLS", "VOTING RIGHTS NOW!", "NO MORE LIES", "JOBS FOR ALL A DECENT PAY NOW!", "WE MARCH FOR JOBS FOR ALL NOW!", "NO MORE LIES", "VOTING RIGHTS NOW!", "PUBLIC SCHOOLS", "JOBS FOR ALL A DECENT PAY NOW!", "WE MARCH FOR JOBS FOR ALL NOW!", "NO MORE LIES", "VOTING RIGHTS NOW!", "PUBLIC SCHOOLS", "JOBS FOR ALL A DECENT PAY NOW!". The crowd extends far into the distance, creating a sense of a large-scale event. The perspective is from slightly above the crowd, looking down the length of the street.

Martin Luther King's quest for equal rights was based on the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. His vision was clear. It had a strong foundation. He communicated it incessantly, whether it was from a pulpit, a march, a protest, or a jail. Lincoln's aim was to save the Union. He articulated this aspiration by his actions and words. Margaret Thatcher set out to change England by reducing social spending and expanding the private



sector. Oprah Winfrey had a vision of a program that would dwell on people, ideas, social justice,

and responsibility. She knew it would be a success and fought to realize her vision. Visionary leaders prefer the impractical hopes of an optimist vs. the pessimism of a realist.

Great leaders work to pursue goals, as a process of enjoyment. They show they like what they do and they convey a sense of purpose, matched with enthusiasm. They are not afraid to use humor to make a discussion lighter. Lincoln often laughed at himself. He used stories. He spoke in parables to lessen the gravity of certain issues and to bring home a point with humility and wisdom.

- **Planning and Executing:** Vision without implementation is useless. Plans are designed as maps to reach goals. Successful leaders prepare them, follow them, and change them, as necessary. The important thing is to translate goals into reality and to measure results.

Prime Minister Thatcher pushed through laws that cut back government spending, she gave incentives to small businesses and checked the growth of expenditures. It was the vision she promised the people of England. She delivered on her promises and stayed in office for eleven years.

Napoleon said he would bring order to France from the chaos of the Revolution, and he did. He planned every move. His military strategies became textbook examples of victory over superior forces. Illustrious leaders are visionaries. They are demanding. They insist on results.



Jacques Louis David - Napoleon Crossing the Alps, 1801, Louvre Museum

Lincoln knew what he wanted from his generals. One after the other, they failed to execute his vision to attack and defeat the South and end the conflict. He removed one after another. Finally, he found General Ulysses S. Grant. He discovered the person able and willing to turn his aspirations into reality. Every great leader needs to find his “Grant.”

- **Integrity and Honesty:** Some may claim that absolute monarchs and dictators are notable leaders. The flaw in tyrannical rule is integrity. Lies must constantly flow to protect the regime. History is littered with tyrants who brought havoc and ruin to their people and, in some cases, the world, because their rule was based on a lack of political, social, and judicial morality. It was about the control of power, not leadership.

Hitler was a powerful communicator. He may have been a competent administrator and he surrounded himself with ambitious and intelligent men who shared his evil and distorted vision of the world. His regime, like so many similar ones, was founded on violence, brute force, aggression, lies, fear, and intellectual dishonesty. It was a colossal failure for Germany and the millions who suffered and died at Hitler’s hand.

Martin Luther King was the antithesis of Hitler. He fought for freedom, democracy, and truth. His philosophy and life were based on non-violence. His legacy lasts as a model for people everywhere to aspire to because, at its heart, was the search for truth and equality.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., March on Washington, 1963, *Courtesy, CNN*

Character is the raw material of leadership. If a ship is made of weak metal, assembled poorly and cheaply, it will not make it through the storms. It will sink. Such is the case with leaders.

Effective ones have a strong moral fiber. They pursue a leadership model, based on integrity and high ideals. Character is what a leader is, and not just how they perform. It is who they truly are, when no one is looking. The pressure of command

often reveals the nature of a person. It discloses their value system. Someone who has a background of loose conduct in their personal life is likely to carry these weaknesses into the workplace. Some leaders may be successful, despite their moral flaws. Imagine what they could accomplish, if they lived by a code of honor.

Eminent leaders are perceived as individuals with a sense of self-respect. Martin Luther King fought legal battles to maintain his reputation of being a man of righteousness. Lincoln gave more pardons than any president before or after his time, because he believed in sparing life and not taking it if there was another alternative. The perception and fact were that Abraham Lincoln was a man of integrity. He viewed life as precious. Oprah Winfrey showed compassion and empathy on her programs. Her charitable work reflected her high sense of moral leadership, as evidenced by the school she created in South Africa.

Lincoln had a reputation of honesty before becoming President. He had a sense of spirituality and integrity which he exhibited in his personal and political life. He would not compromise to achieve. He was willing to accept less to maintain his principles. His character could not be separated from his leadership. He realized that, if he did not stand on the ethical high ground, he could not expect his followers to follow suit. Lincoln knew that an institution tends to be like its leader.



Lincoln reading the Bible to his son, 1865, *Courtesy, WSJ*

Few challenged the integrity of Eleanor Roosevelt, even after she left the White House. She was accused of many things, but few would encroach on her ethics. Allegations were made, but real evidence never surfaced to prove them. Instead, she showed by her actions the person who she was. She took risks to defend those who could not defend themselves.

Oprah was careful in her use of language and her image. She defended herself when she tackled controversial subjects, but constantly projected an aura of truthfulness.

- **Searching for Truth vs. Blame:** Poor leaders look to point fingers, seek blame, and publicly reprimand subordinates. They are not willing to face the personal reality of responsibility that comes with leadership. Lincoln took no credit for victory, but laid defeat on his shoulders, alone. Eleanor Roosevelt worked for social justice, participated in conferences and events that were controversial. In each case she took personal responsibility. Margaret Thatcher took the blame for military setbacks in the Falkland War. She gave the nation's soldiers and sailors credit for victory.

Memorable leaders give others recognition for success and assume culpability for failure. They seek accountability. Effective leaders are accountable to their peers and followers. They set up standards to measure success with objective metrics and feedback. Weak leaders surround themselves with "yes" people who do not tell them the truth but tell them what they want to hear. Julius Caesar and Napoleon fell into this trap. They sought disciples who reflected their image of infallibility, which led to their failure.



First Légion d'Honneur investiture, 15 July 1804, by Jean-Baptiste Debret, Palace of Versailles

- **Giving Credit to Others:** The best leaders are not insecure. They know themselves. They understand their strengths and weaknesses. They are not intimidated by others. In fact, they relish in the growth and development of those they mentor. They shower praise on successful people. They are more interested in the welfare of those who follow them than their own. Oprah Winfrey is an example. She constantly gave acclaim to her team for their achievements.

Napoleon was generous in his praise of the heroism of his troops and those loyal to France. He showered them with medals and recognition. In 1802, he created the National Order of the Legion of Honor which was the highest award for civil and military gallantry.

Lincoln accorded Grant the credit for defeating the South. The General admired him. He refused to consider running against the President in 1864. The finest leaders not only pay tribute to others, but also garner loyalty.

- **Learning to Relax:** Great leaders love their roles. They enjoy what they do. Even so, they know they require time to rest and recover from the stress of command. Leadership is lonely. It requires mental and physical balance to maintain stability. Lincoln relaxed by telling stories. At times, they were to make a point but more often, they allowed him to take his mind off the tragedies that encircled his daily life. He had a good sense of humor. Illustrious leaders often do not take themselves seriously and are able to use humor to teach as well as reduce tension. Eleanor Roosevelt enjoyed the theatre. Oprah Winfrey loves a good book. Most distinguished leaders have a few good friends they share leisure time with. It allows them the release they need to continue their mission.

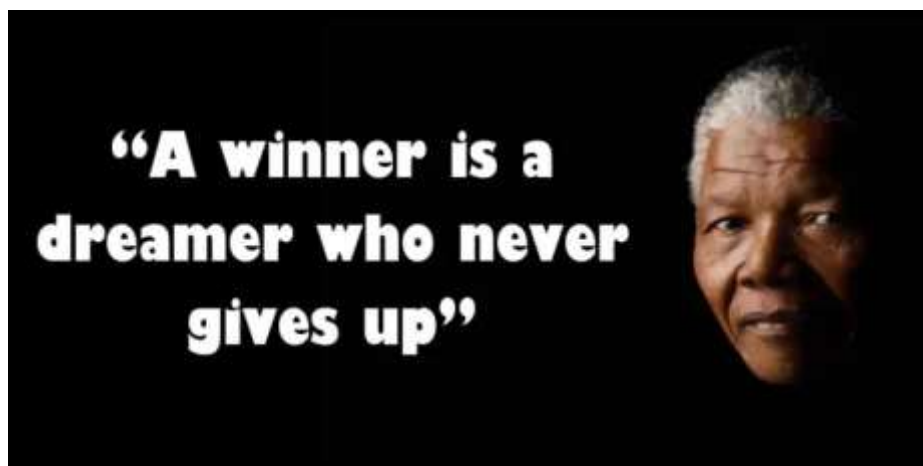
- **Maintaining a High Level of Energy and Health:** Responsibility results in high stress. It demands

energy, careful pacing of work, and monitoring good health. Some historians believe Napoleon's declining health affected his decision-making. Caesar kept himself fit despite bouts of epilepsy. Augustus led a Spartan life and ruled successfully for decades. Mental and physical health is essential, if leaders are to tackle the obligations that come with command. Oprah often describes what good health is about in her magazine and online. Margaret Thatcher knew how to pace herself from the rigors of her job. Lincoln ate sparingly, walked a great deal, and took time to unwind.

- **Love of Learning:** Learning is a key pillar of leadership. Information is fast paced and needs to be refreshed constantly. Talented leaders want information, love knowledge, are curious about novelty and innovation, and appreciate that learning is a lifelong experience. Oprah Winfrey spoke about how her education and love of reading changed her life.

Margaret Thatcher credited her success to education and interest in learning. It helped shape her as a leader. Eleanor Roosevelt kept the picture of her teacher in London on her desk. She talked about how learning transformed her. She fought for education in America and supported learning via the arts, even during the depths of the Depression.

Great leaders learn from their peers. They meet and converse with others who are facing similar challenges. Eleanor Roosevelt took every opportunity to meet heads of state and their spouses and talk about the decisions they made and the new ones they were to face. She had access to leaders in all walks of life, and took the opportunity to learn from them as they learned from her. Oprah constantly wrote and spoke about her love of reading and persistent self-improvement. It included being with celebrated leaders, like Nelson Mandela and Bill Clinton, and learning from them. She started a book club and commented on those that influenced her most. Eleanor Roosevelt attended conferences and seminars, gave speeches, and listened to many. She was an avid learner and incessantly honed her skills. She also mentored others, as exceptional leaders do. Once she saw qualities in others, she did all she could to help them grow.



You Tube, Nelson Mandela Quotes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYnptwetqIE>

Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.
— C. S. Lewis

Have the courage to say no. Have the courage to face the truth. Do the right thing because it is right. These are the magic keys to living your life with integrity.
— W. Clement Stone

About the Author

Emilio Iodice is a former American diplomat, business executive, university administrator, professor of leadership, and best-selling writer and public speaker. Iodice is author of *When Courage Was the Essence of Leadership: Lessons from History* (from which the above excerpts were taken) https://www.amazon.com/When-Courage-was-Essence-Leadership/dp/1544878117/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1517047919&sr=8-1&keywords=when+courage+was+the+essence+of+leadership#customerReviews as well as the Wall Street Journal Number One Best Selling Book, *The Commander in Chief, The Qualities Needed of Leaders of Free Loving Nations in the 21st Century*, https://www.amazon.com/Commander-Chief-Qualities-Leaders-Freedom-Loving/dp/173455858X?pd_rd_w=1kg6K&pf_rd_p=a92e0124-cfa8-4f1e-82b5-a4a348d97008&pf_rd_r=B135ZQEJKD7SJQJDDWFG&pd_rd_r=dad30171-de92-487f-b3f7-ec57c99e909f&pd_rd_wg=uPOLk&pd_rd_i=173455858X&ref=pd_bap_drp_1_i



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