

Quarterback Leadership

From [Complete Quarterbacking](#) by [Don Read](#)

An integral part of playing quarterback is leadership. Because leading takes many forms, there is no absolute blueprint for its installation or existence. Some components of leadership specific to quarterbacking merit examination.

All successful leaders are good managers of people and information. Their approach and manner may be radically different, but approach is not the most important thing. Accomplishment in leading is a process. A leader must be able to demonstrate different personality traits at appropriate times and places and in different situations.

All good leaders possess these 10 common factors:

1. Ability to perceive, digest, and deal with many different personalities.
2. Ability to give appropriate guidance to those around him.
3. Ability to handle the pressure of any given situation.
4. Mastery of self-sacrifice for the good of others.
5. Awareness of morale, harmony, and optimism of the team.
6. Ability to think positively in a negative environment.
7. Drive to be first in all endeavors requiring commitment to established goals.
8. Mastery of effective communication skills and the desire to continually develop them.
9. Desire to go out of his way to motivate others.
10. Knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of the system of play, personnel, and program philosophy.

These 10 principles are the foundation for quality leadership. Some quarterbacks have more of these than others. A leader can use many methods to get effective results from those he leads. Approaches to leadership range in style from the tough, strong, noncompromising person to the soft-spoken, interacting, hands-on guy.

Two contrasting giants from the world of politics who illustrate the point of leaders with diversified styles are Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. Roosevelt demonstrated an authoritarian, dynamic, vociferous personality. Lincoln often said "we" and had deep convictions for those he led and served.

Some of the most proven leaders in football were masters at communication and leadership. Heading the list is former Los Angeles Ram Norm Van Brocklin, who was

said to be extremely direct and challenging to his team. Johnny Unitas of the Baltimore Colts was able to ignite others with the spark in his eyes. The San Francisco 49ers have had many great quarterbacks, but Joe Montana led his 49er teams with what has been described as visible confidence.

There are numerous ways a quarterback can demonstrate leadership. The three great quarterbacks we singled out - Van Brocklin, Unitas, and Montana - all had different styles of commanding others. To say that one method is superior to another would not be fair or accurate. There are many approaches to leading, as can be seen in the careers of greats such as Bart Starr, Warren Moon, Brett Favre, Dan Fouts, Joe Namath, Joe Kapp, Roger Staubach, Terry Bradshaw, Steve Young, Fran Tarkenton, and Dan Marino. In their own way, these quarterbacks were all strong and successful leaders. The common denominator is that their method of leadership worked and worked well.

Success in leadership also depends on a quarterback knowing and understanding his strengths and weaknesses as they relate to his place on the team. To make correct decisions, the quarterback first has to be completely honest with himself. Football games and off-the-field responsibilities require him to use good judgment. The quarterback should ask himself these questions:

- Is this decision mine to make?
- Will my decision be accepted or rejected?
- Will others see this decision as good for the team?
- Am I asking others to do something I myself would not do?
- Do I present my instructions with encouragement and purposefulness?

If the quarterback can ask himself these questions and answer them positively and if he receives positive feedback from others, the indications are excellent that he is on target as a leader.