

# Growing in Leadership

No one is a born leader, but everyone can learn and apply leadership skills. Think about how you can best contribute through McMaster's main leadership capabilities.

**1. Focus on the present and excel in your current role.** Whatever your aspirations for your next career step, you still have to deliver results in your day-to-day job. The first step to getting ahead is getting noticed for consistent performance in your current role.

**2. Help your manager succeed to support organizational objectives.** Your role is to support your manager's priorities, which, in turn, align with organizational objectives. Find out what your manager needs. Then, propose innovative solutions, offer support, and be willing to take action on your own or collaboratively.

**3. Seize leadership opportunities, no matter how small.** Look for leadership opportunities in your daily life. At work, it might be something as simple as facilitating a meeting, offering to help with recruiting events, or participating in special projects or committee work. Perhaps the skills you hope to build fall outside of your team's needs or what your supervisor can offer. In that case, look for opportunities outside of work to step into leadership roles. Volunteering on the board of a local non-profit or organizing an event as a volunteer are great opportunities to skill up.

**4. Add value by addressing unmet needs.** Every workplace has unmet tasks or projects that are waiting to be completed. For example, you might identify an unmet stakeholder need and propose a way to handle it. Or you could come up with a new process that increases efficiency. When you identify and offer to take on a task that no one else is doing, you make yourself stand out.

**5. Focus on humble confidence.** While developing your leadership skills, show modesty balanced with self-assurance. No one wants to work with an overly ambitious colleague who is focused on self-serving needs. Practice "service leadership" by focusing on what others want to accomplish, and make time to support and assist them along the way.

**6. Find role models.** Look for people who have the roles you aspire to and observe what they do – how they act and communicate. Look for someone at the next level, someone similar to you, and look for a way to work with them. Volunteer for a committee they are spearheading or offer to help with one of their projects. Identify behaviours you can emulate while being true to yourself.

**7. Build relationships.** To be recognized as a leader, you need the integrity and interpersonal skills to build respect and trust. Your attitude, presence and impact on others during all interactions help establish your reputation and demonstrate your

leadership and management potential. Treat every interaction as a way to bring value to the organization.

**8. Frame your career aspirations in a way that benefits others.** Discuss your leadership aspirations with your manager while continuing to support your team, department and organization. Solicit feedback from your manager by laying out your accomplishments for the past year and then asking, “Where do you see me continuing to contribute?”

**9. Review the McMaster Leadership Capabilities and conduct a self-review.** McMaster’s leadership capabilities are a valuable reference for your individual development planning.