



 HANDLER

Core Competencies Every Leader Needs For Sustainable Success:

The 2025 Edition





Five Critical Competencies Required of Every Leader

Following the global pandemic of 2020, Handler released the **2021 Handler Report on Leadership Competencies**, recognizing the profound shift in business leadership. Four years later, Handler highlights that our country is now confronting a new set of challenges for 2025, demanding innovative leadership approaches. This insight comes not only from our clients but also from Handler's leadership community. As a result, we are actively engaging in discussions about the evolving expectations for Leaders Worth Following in 2025 and beyond.

The last four years fundamentally reshaped leadership. Supply chain disruptions, economic swings, workforce upheavals, and the lingering effects of a global pandemic have tested leaders like never before. As uncertainty persists—marked by financial pressures, hiring freezes, inflation, and shifting geopolitical dynamics—leaders must rise to meet challenges with steadiness, clarity, and purpose. A new era of potential growth is expected by many next year, so how should we as leaders be preparing for more uncharted waters ahead?

In this report, we highlight five critical competencies that can help leaders inspire trust, guide their teams through change, and position their organizations for sustainable success in 2025.

1. Adaptability:

Thriving Amid Change

In an era defined by constant upheaval, adaptability is key. Leaders must embrace flexibility, whether managing hybrid workforces, responding to supply chain issues, or navigating economic shifts. Research from the **World Economic Forum** emphasizes the importance of agility and flexibility in leadership, especially during rapid societal and economic changes.

Adaptability goes beyond reacting in the moment—it involves anticipating trends, rethinking strategies, and leading with agility. Leaders who remain open to change and model adaptability inspire their teams to do the same, fostering resilience across the organization.

2. Steadfastness:

A Calm Presence in Turbulence

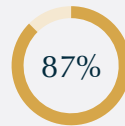
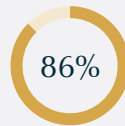
When external pressures mount, employees look for stability. Leaders who exude calmness and consistency help alleviate fear and build confidence. Interestingly, studies show employers tend to be trusted more than any other institution.

Being a stabilizing force means leading with transparency, making thoughtful decisions, and maintaining composure, even in challenging circumstances. Steadiness inspires trust and ensures your team feels secure.

3. Empathy:

Leading with Connection and Care

Empathy is a cornerstone of leadership whether you're facing turbulent times or not. Leaders who actively listen, validate concerns, and offer genuine support foster psychological safety and engagement. According to an [EY Consulting survey](#):



86% of employees believe empathetic leadership boosts morale while **87%** of employees say empathy is essential to fostering an inclusive environment.

From difficult conversations about financial constraints or expansive growth strategies to navigating evolving work conditions, empathy bridges the gap between leadership decisions and team morale. Empathetic leaders build cultures where trust and connection thrive, even amid uncertainty.

4. Purpose-Driven Leadership:

Guiding with Meaning

Leaders who align their actions with a clear mission provide clarity and motivation for their teams.

Ask yourself:

- What is your organization's higher purpose?
- How can you effectively communicate this mission to your team and stakeholders?
- Are your daily actions aligned with this overarching purpose? Are you a purpose-driven organization and leader?

Employees who see how their work connects to the greater good, are more likely to remain engaged and inspired. Purpose fuels resilience and helps leaders navigate even the toughest challenges.

5. Resilience:

Bouncing Back and Moving Forward

Resilience empowers leaders to recover quickly from setbacks or change and maintain a positive outlook. It's about more than enduring difficulties—it's about learning from them and modeling strength for your team. [A survey of 2,400 executives revealed](#) that resilient leaders possess three key traits:

1. Resilience requires strategic investment and commitment.
2. Data and analytics are essential for helping organizations adapt to the unexpected.
3. Building resilience is a collective effort that involves the entire team.

Resilient leaders face challenges head-on, adapt their strategies, and emerge stronger, fostering a culture of perseverance that enables organizations to thrive, even during crises.

Five Important Principles For Leaders to Remember

1

Be Trustworthy and Predictable

Consistency builds trust. Follow through on commitments and maintain open, transparent communication.

2

Empower Your Team

Foster collaboration and innovation by giving your team autonomy and the tools to succeed.

3

Measure What Matters

Redefine success by focusing on metrics like cultural health, employee engagement, and adaptability.

4

Lead with Empathy and Clarity

When delivering tough messages, prioritize compassion and clear, actionable communication.

5

Adapt to Evolving Work Dynamics

Build flexibility into your policies and embrace technology while keeping human connection at the forefront.

Leadership That Inspires Confidence

Leadership and more importantly, Leaders Worth Following are not about authority — it's about empowering and inspiring others. By mastering these core competencies, leaders foster trust, provide stability, and guide their organizations through change.

At Handler, we specialize in identifying Leaders Worth Following who thrive in complex environments. Let us help you build a leadership team ready to navigate challenges to create meaningful, lasting impact. We'd love to [connect with you](#) to share more about our RPO/Private Label Recruitment services and Retained Executive Search services.