

## The Manager as Visionary and Leader

This chapter will enable you to:

- ▶ Understand what is involved in developing the vision and direction for your farmers market.
- ▶ Know the traits common to effective leaders.
- ▶ Know how vision and leadership contribute to your success as a manager.

You may know more about your farmers market than anybody else. You know who your farmers are, who your customers are, who supports your market, how and when the bills are paid, and where the stationery is kept. You know the small details and the big issues. But you are not working alone. To be an effective leader, you need to have a vision. It is the responsibility of the board of directors to work with you to create the vision for your market, but you play a huge role in developing, communicating, and implementing the vision.

### Developing the Vision and Direction for Your Market

You need to be clear about the goals and objectives of your market so that you can articulate them to the people with whom you work. Even though you may have a hundred things on your to-do list each week, it is critical always to keep the

“big picture” in mind.

Take some time to reflect on these questions:

- How does this market fit into the community?
- What products and services does it provide?
- What role do I see it playing in the neighborhood now and into the future?
- How do the decisions I make affect the bigger picture?

Know how to talk about your market. Be prepared for questions from a variety of different sources and have answers to them that will generate interest and excitement in what you are doing. Whether you are recruiting new vendors for the market or planning a promotional event with local talent, sharing your market’s story will get people involved.

For instance, if a local reporter is interested in writing an article on your market, what would you say at the interview? “Well, we are a bunch of farmers out here selling our produce so come support us” does not convey the same message as “We are providing a valuable service to the community by bringing high quality,



## Farmers Market Management Skills

fresh produce straight from the farm to a friendly social environment in the center of your community.” The way you represent the market to the public will have a big impact on how customers perceive it.

The vision that you carry will be the source of energy and enthusiasm from which everyone involved in your market will draw. People will be looking to you for direction; if you are not motivated to make the market the best that it can be, they likely will not be either.

### The Manager as Leader

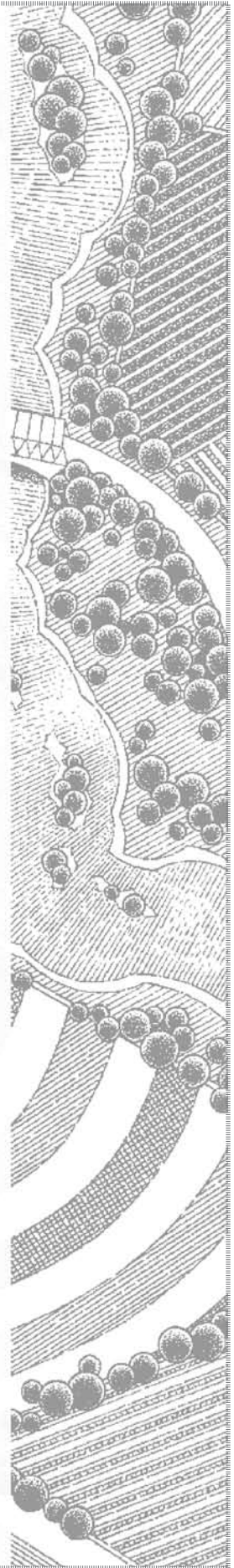
When you think back on the best managers you have worked with in the past, what personality characteristics stand out for you? Is it their strong booming voice or the infectious energy they brought to the job? Is it the way they always seemed to make the right decision at the right time? Great managers are leaders. They are confident, optimistic, decisive, creative, and ethical. They also treat people with respect and often maintain a sense of humor when the going gets tough. There are different leadership styles, and some great managers get things done in the background, enabling others to shine and developing their talents, while others naturally gravitate toward the spotlight. Use the following list of leadership traits to build on your natural strengths.

#### Confident

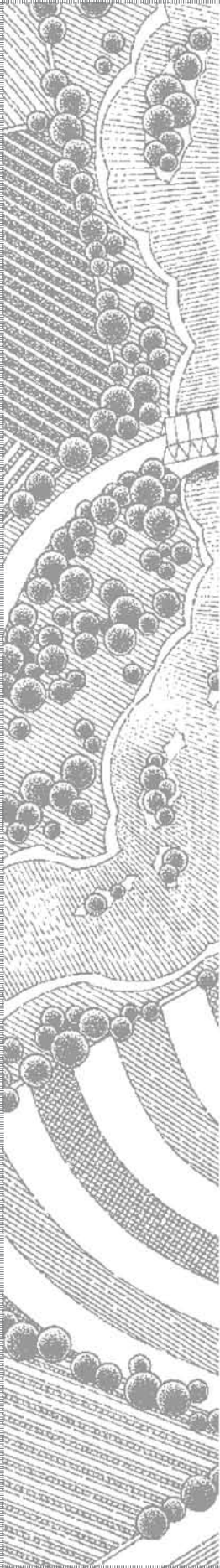
Great managers know they can get the job done. No problem is insurmountable. It may take some creative thinking and hard work to figure out, but it can be fixed, accomplished, or improved. To inspire the confidence of the people with whom you work, you must display this trait yourself. People do not like to work for someone who is unsure or can be easily pushed around. The confidence you project as manager will help others feel more confident about the work they are doing for the market as well. Being confident does not mean making unrealistic promises about your abilities. Rather, it means knowing exactly what you are capable of and working to your highest capacity.

#### Optimistic

People are attracted to optimism. If you see the gold at the end of the rainbow, you make it easier for others to see it too. No one wants to work for a negative or pessimistic manager. Focusing on the difficulties of running the market or the lousy







weather on market day will demotivate people around you. On the other hand, you have great potential to infect others with positive energy that will make them feel good about the market and their contributions to it.

### **Decisive**

A good manager knows how to make decisions. Effective decision-making, which is discussed in more detail later, requires not just blurting out orders and directives from the top but gathering input from diverse perspectives and critically assessing situations.

### **Creative**

Management techniques are not set in stone. A good manager often relies on a little creative thinking to develop new strategies, solve problems, or find new sources of funding. Do not be afraid to look beyond the “normal” way of doing things for some creative options that have not been tried before.

### **Respectful**

People fundamentally want to be treated well. If you treat others with respect, they will return the favor. A great deal of your job centers on your ability to get other people to work with you. Respecting your coworkers and business associates will make your task much easier.

### **Balanced**

Do not forget your sense of humor. If you are not enjoying your work, you may be making others miserable too. Humor can take the edge off the most difficult situations, so do not be afraid to look at the humorous side of things.

### **Ethical**

Over time, you will develop a detailed understanding of the issues and problems that your market faces. But have you taken time to think about your personal ethics in regard to these issues? Say, for instance, that you have begun to suspect that one of your more popular vendors is selling produce that she did not grow herself. She draws many customers to the market, and the other vendors do not appear to be aware of what she is doing. Where do you draw the line? Do you run the risk of losing customers and kick her out of the market? Do you say nothing and hope

that no one else figures out what is going on? In this case, it is your personal and professional ethics that will decide the outcome. Perhaps no one will figure out that you let this woman sell outside produce, but they may know instinctively that you are applying different standards to different situations.

### Trustworthy

Building trust takes time. If you have been active in your community for a long time, you likely have already established a reputation with many of the people around you. You know the value of the long-term relationships you have developed with your neighbors, business associates, and friends. If you are new to the area, you have a lot of work to do to encourage trust from the people with whom you work. If you have taken over a market from a previous manager, you may be seen as an outsider for awhile and you will have to put some extra effort into building trust with established vendors and customers.

The importance of being trustworthy cannot be overstated. The degree to which others trust you will determine how likely they will be to work with you now and to continue to work with you in the future. Once you have secured the trust of those around you, it is important to maintain that trust. If a person trusts you and you betray that trust, it will be quite difficult, perhaps impossible, to regain it. Furthermore, word of mouth from scorned business associates or former customers can be devastating to a business.

### Conclusion

This chapter has introduced you to some of the responsibilities of leaders and to some of the characteristics shared by effective leaders. The next chapter discusses roles and responsibilities of the manager in carrying out the day-to-day work of the market.

