

Astute Strategist	Empathetic Facilitator	Pragmatic Technophile	Catalyzing Agent	Prudent Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands complexity Possesses broad knowledge Is a quick thinker Has good judgement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds relationships Communicates effectively Finds common ground Manages expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embraces innovation Continues learning about new technology Seeks opportunities to leverage technologies Understands risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapts to change Drives outcomes Seizes opportunities Motivates others to act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manages budgets Is business savvy Takes a balanced approach Is resourceful
Persuasive Entrepreneur	Shrewd Diplomat	Fearless Adviser	Passionate Talent Scout	Inspirational Team Captain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a curious mind Thinks creatively Believes that change is possible Knows how to sell an idea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possesses political acuity Is thick-skinned Manages multiple priorities Is a good negotiator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Filters relevant information Provides honest advice Has integrity Understands when to push and when to step back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is enthusiastic about work Plays an active role in talent management Values leadership at all levels Embraces and leverages diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leads by example Demonstrates authenticity Has a positive attitude Is a team player

A Top 10 List for Public Service Leadership

Sara Caverley

In order for Canada to remain competitive as a nation, Canada's public service must compete for the most creative, nimble minds of each generation. Even in an era of globalization and universal connectivity, formulating and communicating public policy requires a highly specialized skill set. The profile of the perfect public servant is nothing like the dusty cliché.

Will leadership in the public service of the future require different skills than it does today? The impending sea change of leadership in Canada's public service requires an influx of talent from younger generations. But new realities demand 21st-century leadership competencies that aren't considered to be in abundance today. More than a process or structural change, a high-performing public service requires an ongoing investment in people—a pipeline of new talent to shape innovative and impactful public services across the country. But who are the next generation of public sector leaders?

In our discussions across sectors, the Public Policy Forum explored a broad range of capabilities, including acquired skills and innate attributes.

Rather than a definitive list of top skills, we've developed a select grouping of leadership profiles. What follows are combinations of the kind of competencies that will be increasingly required across our future public services.

1 Astute strategist: An agile public service needs leaders who can manage complex situations involving multiple interests, perspectives and implications. More valuable than specialists now are generalists, with well-rounded backgrounds and strong analytical skills. Effective leaders have good judgment and a proactive, strategic approach that involves building support and seizing opportunities for change.

2 Empathetic facilitator: Collaboration across the public service requires leaders who are skilled at

mobilizing employees and breaking down silos to achieve common goals. However, leading in a horizontal environment may be less about competencies and more about accepting shared power and appreciating different viewpoints. Public service leaders need empathy to understand what motivates others and humility to embrace collaboration both inside and outside government.

3 Pragmatic technophile: To harness new tools that support agile government, the public service needs leaders who embrace innovation, develop technological fluency and build organizational capacity. Savvy leaders are practical and strategic about new technology, and weigh costs against benefits to ensure the greatest return on investment. Appreciating these trade-offs, they can best determine how to leverage technology to adapt to changing needs.

4 Catalyzing agent: A fluid public service needs flexible, enterprising thinkers committed to achieving outcomes, regardless of the obstacles ahead. When faced with multiple barriers to change, strong leaders determine what's feasible and plant the seeds for buy-in. They can rally support around a shared vision with the ability to build trust, establish respect and empower others.

5 Prudent manager: Business acumen has become more important for public sector leaders in the climate of austerity. Effective leaders balance out the tension between managing budgets and supporting innovation. They are pragmatic and proactive in developing smarter business strategies to maximize talent, resources, partnerships and opportunities across and outside government for sustainable impact.

6 Persuasive entrepreneur: An innovative public service needs creative thinkers and lifelong learners driven by a desire to do things better. Enterprising leaders seek new avenues for improvement by asking questions and exploring what's possible. They break

down complex ideas and convince others of the best course of action. They understand the issues, are passionate about their vision and resonate with their audience.

7 Shrewd diplomat: Leading today's public service demands more political acuity. Leaders need to understand the interplay among public perceptions, stakeholder positions and government priorities. They must excel at negotiating both inside and outside government, and be adaptable to political and media scrutiny. This also requires a more pro-active, practical approach to limit unnecessary risks and contain potential crises.

8 Fearless adviser: Public service leaders must be willing to speak frankly about the issues, provide honest, nonpartisan advice and have the courage to make tough decisions. However, they need to know when to push for change and when to step back. Strong leaders demonstrate integrity and help build a healthy organizational culture based on trust and respect.

9 Passionate talent scout: Public service leaders need to be involved in rebranding the public service, recruitment and developing future leaders. Talent acquisition is not just for HR anymore. Good leaders care about their work and convey that passion to others, inspiring interest through broad outreach and instilling pride through meaningful engagement. They build teams with complementary skills and expertise, harnessing all types of diversities and different perspectives.

10 Inspirational team captain: Public service leaders need to foster a healthy workplace environment, be accessible and demonstrate that employee engagement is a priority. They must lead by example, challenge the status quo and encourage risk-taking. The attitude, emotional intelligence and likeability of good leaders are shaped by empathy, authenticity, self-awareness and a genuine concern for the wellbeing of others.

Good public policy depends on the capacity of the public service to

fill these key competency profiles. While there's no shortage of applicants for the public service, maintaining a high-performing organization depends on talent management strategies that effectively respond to shifting demographics and intensifying competition.

Although new competencies are emerging, a number of the skill sets highlighted here—such as the prudent manager and inspirational team captain—represent traditional leadership qualities that remain relevant. These profiles capture a blend of expertise, experience, soft skills and traits that may not all be found in a single leader, but could provide the criteria for building a well-rounded leadership team.

Because organizational transformation demands collective effort, leadership development across the public service will help ensure that real change can be implemented at all levels and sustained over the long-term. This means challenging the hierarchical culture endemic in most bureaucracies to maximize talent and knowledge.

The public service must also ensure that performance management and professional development contribute to greater productivity and innovation. But more importantly, leveraging talent within the public service requires a genuine commitment to engaging employees, investing in their development and providing them with opportunities to make a real impact.

The role of the public service is changing. Like any large organization, it needs to remain relevant and resilient by modernizing practices and transforming culture. Given its far-reaching impact, all Canadians have a stake in ensuring that the public service is adept, flexible and forward thinking. **P**

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