

# SIGMA

## Leader Character Series



**Great Leaders  
Have Drive**



## GREAT LEADERS HAVE DRIVE

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**A dream without ambition is like a car without gas...  
you're not going anywhere.**

— Sean Hampton

In order to accomplish goals, there must be a desire to succeed — to have the energy to make things happen and see projects and ideas through to completion, especially in the face of adversity. Without drive, people and organizations lose momentum and productivity stalls. While drive is important, it's also one of the most easily misused and misunderstood character strengths. Drive can be confused with being driven, a quality that has been shown to have a negative impact on employee well-being and engagement. Being overly results-oriented and ignoring other important aspects of good leadership, like providing regular guidance and feedback, reduces employee morale and can lead to burnout.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, having energy or vigor has positive impacts in the workplace for both oneself and for others.<sup>2</sup>

Leaders who possess drive are passionate and results-oriented. These leaders approach challenges with vigor, strive to do their best, and demonstrate initiative while consistently working towards their goals. Drive powers results and enables sustained productivity. Learning to harness drive increases the likelihood of goal achievement and strengthens one's ability to influence others.

In assessing your ability to use your drive effectively, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I take action to realize my goals?
- Am I likely to approach challenges with energy?
- Do I put forth my best effort?
- Am I known for taking the initiative and getting things done?
- Do I take care of myself so that I can maintain my energy?

### Ways to Improve Your Drive

**Find your passion:** No one feels passionate all the time, and that's okay — and healthy. If you're not someone who often feels passionate about your work, you might feel like you aren't cut out to be a leader, but that's unlikely to be true. Consider whether you strive to achieve excellent results, and whether you help others to strive for excellence too. If you do, you're probably more passionate — and possess more drive — than you think. If you simply haven't

found your passion yet, that's something to explore further by paying attention to your interests and the environment you work in.

**Identify your key behaviors:** While setting goals is a critical first step, it's important to identify the behaviors that will get you closer to achieving them. Enacting these behaviors is the real test of whether you will reach your goals. Ask yourself, "What actions will get me closer to my goal?" Stay focused on taking those actions on a consistent basis. For example, if you want to build better relationships, you might decide to focus on initiating conversations with others or asking questions when engaged in conversations, because those are actions that will get you closer to your desired end result. Over time you will make progress, start achieving your goals, and become more passionate and engaged.

**Take time to recharge:** When you recognize that your motivation and energy to pursue your goals and strive for excellence are flagging, don't hesitate to take a break. Take breaks, move your body, and eat nutritious food. It's not true that you need to reduce the amount of time you spend sleeping or spending time with loved ones to be successful.<sup>3</sup> Instead, focus on creating a sustainable lifestyle that gives you the energy you need to reach your goals.

## Consider These Tips to Moderate Your Drive

Effective leaders are able to balance the 11 leader character dimensions rather than focusing on just a few. As you develop your leader character, look for places where strengths may need to be moderated. If you scored a 4 or higher on drive, use the tips below to help you balance the expression of this character dimension.

**Have drive, but don't be driven.** As you strive to accomplish your goals it's important to keep the distinction between having drive (good) and being driven (bad) in mind. Think of drive like a fuel or energy you can harness, and not something beyond your control that compels you to act. Drive should be fueling worthy causes in a balanced way, not steering the wheel and pushing for your success at the detriment of your health or other aspects of your life.

**Set reasonable expectations.** For leaders who are high on drive, it can be extremely frustrating to accomplish less than you want or expect to. While it's important to look to the bottom line and long-term outcomes to assess one's results, it's not very helpful to expect to show high drive on a daily basis — such as expecting to finish your entire to-do list every day. By focusing on consistently showing up, working to enact positive changes, and striving for excellence, with enough time you will reach your goals and save yourself a lot of anxiety and stress.

**Don't lose sight of your values.** It's not necessary to place results above all else as a metric of success. Doing so may indeed produce results, but those results will come at a high cost, like less time spent with loved ones or worsening health. Positive collaborative relationships, supportive environments, and factors that extend past the bottom-line matter too. Spend time regularly assessing your values and keep those values in mind as you strive to reach your goals.

## Resources



[If You Want to Achieve Your Goals, Don't Focus On Them](#)



[Reawakening Your Passion for Work](#)



Develop your drive by taking advantage of SIGMA's coaching services.

Contact SIGMA for more information about leader character.

SIGMA Assessment Systems, Inc.

Email: [support@SigmaHR.com](mailto:support@SigmaHR.com)

Call: 800-265-1285

## References

<sup>1</sup> Goleman, D. (March-April 2000). Leadership that gets results. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2000/03/leadership-that-gets-results>

<sup>2</sup> Shirom, A. (2003). Feeling vigorous at work? The construct of vigor and the study of positive affect in organizations. In *Emotional and Physiological Processes and Positive Intervention Strategies*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

<sup>3</sup> Rosekind, M. R., Gregory, K. B., Mallis, M. M., Brandt, S. L., Seal, B., & Lerner, D. (2010). The cost of poor sleep: workplace productivity loss and associated costs. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 91-98.