What Is A Link?

26 Qualities That Define A Link
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The viewpoints expressed herein are strictly those of the author.
Message From The Central Area Director

Link Alice Strong Simmons 18th Central Area Director

The Central Area Organizational Effectiveness Team has prepared this wonderful guide to qualities that define a Link. It is an excellent resource for each of us to use to enhance our personal membership in our organization, to assist in orienting new or reinstating Link members, and to further assist us in fostering and promoting The Links, Incorporated’s Brand.
I encourage you to read this booklet from cover to cover and keep it handy for referencing throughout each Links' year.

Enjoy.

A special thank you to Link Gladys Hankins, Chair, Queen City (OH) Chapter and Link Mercedes Henderson Miller, Chicago (IL) Chapter, Central Area Organizational Effectiveness for the development of this amazing document.

**Link Alice Strong Simmons**
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A Link is a strong, accomplished woman of African-American heritage. She is a mother, a grandmother, a sister, a daughter, and a friend. She is you.

Although she has lived a wondrous life, she has still struggled and faced hardship. Moreover, she has endured indignities far too numerous to count, even encountering people along the way who tried to make her invisible. But to be clear, those who tried to minimize her in any way soundly met defeat. She always holds her head high. Her strength is her natural birthright.

A Link is the daughter of warriors, kings and queens. Her heritage is a source of great pride, confidence and strength. Today, a
Link is the product of those who came before her bequeathing to her the wisdom and courage to forge ahead and the audacity to dream big.

Today, she follows in her ancestors' footsteps. She knows it takes a village to raise a child, so she teaches her children and all children that they are second to none. She inspires friends, daughters, sons, sisters and brothers to be powerful, radiant and proud, and to meet every challenge with self-assurance and conviction. She enables and supports her men to be strong, capable, and fearless Connecting Links, fathers, friends, and brothers.

What is a Link? She is an awesome woman of color who lives and leaves a positive legacy for her family, her friends, her race, and her community.

We are blessed to be Links.
DEDICATION

This booklet is lovingly dedicated to our illustrious founders and to Links across the entire Links, Incorporated organization, and particularly, to Links of the Central Area.

In examining our six national strategic priorities for 2012, one priority stood apart, and that was “Promoting the Links Brand.” When we looked at what a Link is and how she presents who she is to the world, we knew there was no better way to brand our organization than by the Link sisters who comprise it.

This is the product of our effort to define the highest attributes and qualities that we have seen displayed by our awesome Link sisters and as envisioned by our founders.

Our Beloved Founders
Margaret Rozelle Hawkins and
Sarah Strickland Scott
INTRODUCTION

For Links Only

This booklet describes attributes and characteristics of members of The Links, Incorporated, an organization dedicated to service to our communities through binding friendships with one another.

The qualities defined herein are not exclusive to Links since many other women embody these same traits. What makes Links unique is that all Links embody these qualities. And when you find attributes such as open minded, volunteer service, trustworthy, respect for others, true friends, peace loving, excellent listeners and many, many more in all women who are members of this organization, you are looking at a truly impressive and exceptional group of women who are making a difference in our world and who will continue to do so ad infinitum.
Read *What Is A Link* to know what is expected of you as a member of this coveted organization.

Finally, in the following pages, you will see how being a Link is the most effective way to promote the Links brand.
A LINK SERVES

A Link willingly serves others. Service, just as is friendship, is one of the basic tenets upon which our organization was founded. A Link serves the community because she genuinely desires to help others and make a difference. She does not do this for self-promotion. Her intentions are noble and high minded.

A Link is magnanimous. She generously gives of her time and regards her commitments to serving others as seriously as she regards her commitment to anything that is important to her, including her job and family.
A LINK SERVES

A Link does not resent the hours she is required to serve. Indeed, many Links exceed the minimum requirement. Nor does she have an "I'm not getting paid for this," attitude. She realizes that volunteer service is never for pay. A Link reaps her rewards from the good she generates for others and from all the good that is returned to her in whatever fashion it comes. She knows that as she sows, so too, will she reap.
A LINK IS A FRIEND

A Link will be a wonderful friend. However, she knows she must first be her own best friend. This means she loves and respects herself and never compromises her standards and values. As she is a friend to herself, she can be a true friend to others.

A Link is loyal. She would never betray her friends but will always have their best interest at heart. She is truthful, honest, and trustworthy. She never gossips about others, but will quickly speak up in their defense when necessary.
A LINK IS A FRIEND

She generously gives what she can to help others in need. She is compassionate, caring and always willing to lend a helping hand or a concerned ear. She offers her friends advice and comfort. She proudly celebrates their successes, and praises their accomplishments.

A Link will never say, “In the spirit of friendship, I will not tell my friend something or other.” Indeed, in the spirit of friendship, she will tell her, for she knows that only true friends will tell each other the truth. Therefore, she can caringly give her friends feedback. She knows she can also disagree with them while caring for them no less than before.

A Link forges lasting and solid relationships that are real.
A LINK IS AUTHENTIC

When you see a Link, what you see is what you get. For a Link is real. She is the same person when she is alone as she is when she is with others. She does not try to be what others want her to be, and she refuses to be phony and insincere. A Link knows that her authentic self is one in which her behavior reflects her true thoughts, beliefs and words.

She is sincere in her authenticity for she knows that by being herself, she is demonstrating what is in her heart. She knows that any untruth is a lie and she
A LINK IS AUTHENTIC

respects herself too much to ever tell an untruth of any kind.

A link is genuinely interested in others, which is why she is able to be a good friend to others. A Link is eager to serve her community, not because she has to but from the goodness of her heart.

When a Link smiles, her heart is happy. She never ends her day with second thoughts or worries about what she did that day. Because everything she did that day, just as every day, was a demonstration of her authentic self. So each night, she sleeps well and has sweet dreams.
A Link believes “the customer is always right.” Even when doing service work in underserved communities, a Link understands that the people she serves, her customers, are as valued in our Maker’s sight as is she. Indeed, she knows that because she may be more fortunate than many of the people who benefit from our programs, she is grateful for the opportunity to serve them. And she does so with pleasure and grace. She knows that, but for the grace of God she could be one of those very people who benefit from her services.

A Link treats people from all walks of life with respect, consideration and honor.
A LINK TREATS ALL WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT

She will never do anything to degrade any person or leave anyone feeling as if they were “less than” others.

A Link considers it a distinct honor to treat all people with dignity and respect.
A Link wants her chapter to shine

A Link supports her local chapter. She has a clear vision for her home chapter. She wants it to excel in every way, and particularly, through the sharing of strong bonds of friendship between members, as well as through their outstanding service that produces transformational programs – programs that make a substantial difference in the lives of those individuals they serve.

"Services to Youth" going strong

She wants to have hugely successful fundraisers, establish strong community
A LINK WANTS HER CHAPTER TO SHINE

alliances and outstanding relationships with other chapters in her city. She unselfishly does what is right for her chapter, even when it is not necessarily right for her.

Every Link is responsible for working to create the chapter that she wants hers to be. This requires an unrelenting commitment and dedication. She will never settle for less than the very best, and she will do everything it takes to ensure that her vision for her chapter is met.

Links give their chapter PR committees plenty to work with in conveying to their communities the wonderful achievements and contributions of their fabulous chapter.
A LINK LISTENS

A Link listens to others. She realizes that listening is an area where we can all improve. Furthermore, she knows everyone truly wants to be heard.

A Link realizes that to become a good listener, she must be genuinely interested in others and she must sincerely desire to know what they have to say, even if their points of view are completely different than hers. She earnestly wants to know and understand others' feelings and desires, and she has no need to assume a defensive posture when someone has an opposing point of view.

She is open to the knowledge that others' thoughts and ideas have as much merit as hers. If there is a disagreement, she wants
A LINK LISTENS

to know the basis for it so she can gain a greater understanding.

A Link realizes that it is only when she is afraid of what she might hear that she does not listen well. When she is at peace and comfortable with herself, she can welcome others to speak freely, and she will listen diligently. In fact, a Link often finds herself amazed by what she learns when she decides to really listen to what others have to say.
A Link knows her character, skills, and talents. She knows who she is and she never flaunts herself, her position, her titles, or her former achievements to others. She realizes that while she may be better at some things than others, there are many who are better at other things than she is. And so, in her mind, it all balances out.

Because she has self-confidence, a Link gives credit to others when credit is due. She deplores arrogance - a negative trait that shows people that she thinks she is better than others. A Link realizes that most people find haughtiness offensive.
In her wisdom, a Link does not overrate her own abilities or success, but accepts that all people have something special to offer. She does not view her wealth or station in life as a reason to look down her nose at others. She realizes that a superior attitude displayed by any Link gives people a negative view of the Links, Incorporated, and she never wants to do anything that puts our beloved organization in a bad light.
A LINK IS ON TIME

A Link makes it a point to be on time. She respects the time commitments of others and does not ignore this commitment by being late.

Every Link has the same 24 hours in every day that every other Link has. While it is true that some Links may have greater demands on their time than others, a Link knows that it is still a matter of choice as to whether or not she arrives anywhere on time. Every Link knows that she could do just one more thing before she leaves for her commitment. She could make just one more telephone call or answer just one or two more e-mails before she sets out for a meeting or an event. She also knows how traffic tends to run this time of day and adjusts her driving time accordingly.
A LINK IS ON TIME

A Link is as conscientious about arriving on time to a Links function as she is about arriving to work on time. She considers others’ time and knows that if some are there waiting for her, she is wasting theirs.

Being considerate and respectful of others, she does whatever it takes to be in place at the appointed time. And she appreciates when others do the same.
A LINK SUPPORTS HER LEADERSHIP

A Link reveres and supports her leadership and all Links in leadership roles desire to do a good job.

She first respects the office, no matter who holds it. Then she learns to admire, respect, honor, and follow her leadership. She is grateful to those who willingly accept leadership positions. A Link takes it upon herself to help her leadership become even better leaders. Her behavior shows that she respects them for their willingness to take on leadership roles in the organization.

A Link is never jealous of her leaders and she never circumvents their authority. She treats them the way she, herself, would want
A LINK SUPPORTS HER LEADERSHIP

to be treated if she were to take on a leadership role.

A former leader in the Links organization will accept that she is no longer the leader, and will devote herself fully to being a good follower in support of the new leadership. Of course she will coach and mentor the new leaders, helpfully, where appropriate.

A Link will never disrespect her leadership. She knows that to do so would disrespect all other Links. Link leaders can thrive and grow and glide their organizations to greatness because their members are the “wind beneath their wings,” as evidenced by their willingness and ability to stand behind and support those in charge.
A Link supports other Links. Support is demonstrated in many different ways, and a Link knows many different ways to show her support. For example, she holds her sister Links up. She speaks well of them and never unkindly. She offers them words of encouragement, as well as words of wisdom.

She knows that support means that sometimes she has to give her sister Links constructive feedback. And she cares enough about them to do that in a kind, sensitive, and respectful way.
A LINK SUPPORTS OTHER LINKS

She does not use playing “devil’s advocate” to minimize her sister Links' ideas. Instead, she supports their ideas and looks for ways to make those ideas work.

A Link values her sister Links’ judgments, and gives them her due respect, kindness, and appreciation. She is patient with other Links, for she realizes that we are all growing and none of us are perfect. Therefore, she is forgiving of others as she, herself, desires to be forgiven.
A LINK KNOWS
THE LINKS, INCORPORATED

A Link is well read, and importantly, she knows Links documents. There is a wealth of Links, Incorporated literature available to all Links. In order to be knowledgeable, a Link knows that she has a duty to read the:

1. Membership Manual *
2. Manual of Procedures *
3. Chapter, Area and National Constitution and By-Laws *
4. Ethics and Standards of Conduct Manual *
5. Latest edition of Roberts Rules of Order
   *Available at www.linksinc.org
A Link knows the Links, Incorporated

A Link knows that if she follows the Links policies and procedures, she will always do the right thing.

She also knows there is nothing wrong with not knowing something. She does believe, however, that something is wrong when there are resources available to teach her, and she ignores these resources and remains uninformed.

A Link understands that if she takes the initiative to learn all about our organization, not just those things she is required to know, she will do things right and be an outstanding role model to others. She will be able to contribute at the highest level to our organization.
A LINK MAKES OTHERS HAPPY

To paraphrase the pop song, a Link...

"Makes Someone Happy"

She knows that to make other people happy, she must be happy herself. As a happy person, she loves life. She is positive and optimistic. She knows and avails herself of the things that make her happy, and she seeks to see the beauty and greatness in all things.

A happy Link loves Mondays and rainy days. She does not see these days as dreary
or gloomy, but as wonderful gifts of life. She does not look for faults in others but for things about others to praise.

She knows that happiness is a choice. By choosing happiness, she is able to create the kind of climate in which others can be happy too.

A Link values all people for whom they are individually. She openly and willingly compliments others. Her face lights up when she encounters people, and they, in turn, glow with joy for having elicited such a warm response from her.
A LINK IS OPEN Minded

A Link has an open mind. She considers other people's ideas and looks for value in those ideas. She is never judgmental or closed to new or better ways of doing things.

A Link wants to continue to learn and grow, so she knows she must be open to opinions that are different from her own. She looks for ways to be creative. She knows that to acknowledge and accept the ideas and suggestions of others takes nothing away from her, for she realizes that her way is not the only way. There are usually many means to an end.

A Link openly shares her ideas and welcomes those of others. She knows that being closed to other people's thinking can make her a small-minded person, and that is something she never wants to be.
In her quest to be her best self, she enriches her life by learning new things. Those Links who did not grow up with computers seek to learn how to use them too, and usually find, to their delight, that technology is a beautiful thing.

A Link keeps her mind open. She knows that new and improved ideas only make her better, and she always strives to be her best.
A Link is responsible and accountable.

A Link takes responsibility and is accountable. She also knows that personal accountability means acting without guidance or superior authority. She knows that this is what makes her a responsible person. Most importantly, she knows what bucks stop with her.

A Link realizes that taking responsibility is a function of her character. And as a woman of character, she understands that character is the way she acts even when no one else is looking. Character
A LINK IS RESPONSIBLE AND ACCOUNTABLE shows what she is made of, and who she really is.

If a Link takes responsibility for getting something done, there is absolutely no way it will not get done, for she will hold herself personally accountable by doing whatever it takes to meet her commitments.

If a Link says she will do something, she wants others to be able to count on her to keep her word. She grew up knowing that she is only as good as her word.
A link does everything in a first-class manner. Furthermore, she does this in all walks of life, and the pattern naturally carries forth into the Links organization. Excellence is the Link's standard and she always strives for the very best that she can deliver. A Link needs only to look around at her sister Links to see that this standard of excellence is the thread that runs throughout our entire organization.

A Link knows that she can always set the bar higher as status quo is not in her vocabulary. She does not usually subscribe to the theory of “not reinventing the wheel.” Nor does she put too much merit in the phrase, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” This is because she knows that although it might
not be broken, it can almost always be improved. So she continually resets the bar in order to reach a level not previously reached.
A Link speaks proudly. She speaks with authority. She is never reluctant or afraid to let her voice be heard, for she knows that she has something worthwhile to say. She uses her voice to counsel others, offer words of wisdom, teach, and to lend caring and comforting advice.

A Link thinks before speaking. She chooses her words wisely and with efficacy. She does not start sentences with "ums" or "ers.” She speaks confidently, clearly and respectfully.
A LINK SPEAKS PROUDLY

She always shows interest in others by asking them questions about themselves and listening in earnest. She never seeks to steal their spotlight by turning every topic onto herself.

She does not speak when others are speaking, nor does she interrupt or distract them, unless it is because she feels they are being indecorous. She knows that how she says something is as important as what she says.

A Link has much to offer the world. Her voice commands attention and she wants the world to hear what she has to say. When a Link speaks, people listen.
A LINK HAS GREAT CARRIAGE

Just look at her. Starting with her lovely posture, a Link walks straight and tall and holds her head up. She knows where she is going so she focuses her eyes straight ahead. Her shoulders are properly aligned with the rest of her body because she is proud to be a Link. She walks with dignity and grace and all eyes behold her when she walks into a room.

There are some who say you can tell a Link by the way she sits. A Link never slouches. She keeps her back straight
A LINK HAS GREAT CARRIAGE

and her knees close together, even when she is wearing slacks. If she crosses her legs, she does so tastefully. When her body is aligned, she sits tall, proud, and erect. This means the central core of her body is strong and she is well balanced.

A Link is absolutely the picture of refinement.
A Link has impeccable manners. She always shows respect to all people and particularly to her elders from whom she wishes to listen and learn. She also respects those who are younger for she realizes that there is value in all age groups and she can learn from the young just as she can from those who are more “mature.”

She uses the terms "Please" and "Thank you," freely. She says "You are welcome." She does not say "Yeah," she says "Yes." She does not say "Huh?" Instead, she says "What?" or "Pardon?" If offered something she does not want, she does not grunt, "Nuh uh," for “no.” She says "No, thank you."

A Link shakes hands firmly. She has good driving manners. She is always respectful to those who serve her, such as
A Link is Ms. Manners

waitresses and waiters, by giving them eye contact and speaking cordially. She always tips people for service, including the maid who cleans her hotel room.

She never comes off as arrogant or immature. She does not criticize others, but is positive and complimentary. Never is she insulting.

A Link has good telephone manners. She makes an effort to say, “Hello” in a polite and pleasant way. And because she is considerate, she promptly returns phone calls and responds to e-mails. She always responds to request to R.S.V.P. in a timely way.
Every Link has many occasions to eat in public, whether it is at Links’ assemblies and conferences, or at chapter or committee meetings. When dining during a Links program where there is a speaker or performer, a Link does not distract her table mates by talking during the speech or performance. She gives her undivided attention to the presenter(s).
A LINK KNOWS FINE DINING

Furthermore, she knows how to eat in public. She never allows others to see the food in her mouth by chewing with it open, or by talking while she is chewing. She uses the proper silverware to put bite-size portions of food into her mouth, and chews them thoroughly before swallowing.

If she chews gum at all, it is usually in private. A Link does not "pop" her gum, or contort her mouth in an obscene way while chewing. Actually, she does not chew gum in a noticeable way, especially in a meeting or when speaking face to face with someone. She demonstrates proper etiquette at all times. You can take a Link anywhere. 😊
A LINK LAUGHS

A Link has a sense of humor. In certain circumstances, she may joke or even "cut-up." But she never makes a public scene. Neither is she a stuffed shirt or so reserved that she cannot laugh when the situation calls for laughter. While she can laugh with others, she never laughs at them.

She is neither prudish nor so straight-laced that others are uncomfortable in her presence if they want to enjoy a tastefully humorous story or joke. She knows how to function in any setting and never imposes her way or values on others.
A LINK HAS CLASS

Oh yes, a Link definitely has class – “old” class that was passed down from her mothers, grandmothers, and beyond. But she is not stuck up. Her classiness is exhibited by her undeniable self-respect. She is confident and carries herself with poise. Her style of dress is clean and elegant. Her clothing and accessories flatter her body and she is not held captive by trends. She puts a strong sense of self before elaborate fashions that, while "in" may reveal too much skin or fit inappropriately. A Link wants to not only be her best, but to also look her best. Her demeanor is graceful and unmistakably high style.

A Link is in a class of her own. She is open to learning and personal growth. She
Continually seeks wisdom and willingly learns from others.

She is socially, economically, religiously and politically aware, thereby not prone to making embarrassing blunders. She acts in a way that is not offensive to others and she never makes a nuisance of herself when she is with others.

A Link does not have to hide behind a facade. Instead, because she has so much class, she is always able to be her truly awesome self.
A LINK THINKS AND DREAMS BIG

A Link knows that to do big things, she must think big. She realizes that if she can dream it, she can conceive it. And if she can conceive it, she can achieve it. So she uses her brilliant imagination to come up with ideas that can make a positive difference in people's lives. Then she turns her focus to being successful.

When she is working in concert with other Links, she is not afraid to ask for help or to assist others when they need it.

A Link knows that she can make a huge difference with a single good idea. She does not discourage easily, for she knows that with perseverance and an eye toward
Successfully fulfilling her expectations, her dream will be fulfilled.

A Link believes in service programs that truly help others. She will not settle for anything less. While making a small difference is certainly beneficial to some, a Link knows that making a big difference can transform whole communities. And that is her goal and her commitment.

She agrees with Langston Hughes when he said: "Hold fast to dreams for if dreams die, life is like a broken wing bird that cannot fly."

A Link wants to soar.
A LINK IS REGISTERED

Not only is a Link registered to vote and votes in state and federal elections, she registers to attend Links National Assemblies, Area Conferences and Summits. She is drawn to these forums to learn more about The Links, Incorporated and its characteristics. She is not driven by the one-in-five requirement for attendance, but by her love for The Links organization and her desire to learn as much as she can about it while meeting Links from other chapters.

A Link looks forward to learning about outstanding programs, membership matters, and operations of this organization. She
A LINK IS REGISTERED

gains important information that keeps her up-to-date and current on all aspects of our changing and growing organization. A Link also looks forward to the friendships, camaraderie and networking that takes place at these remarkable gatherings.

A Link knows that she can make no better investment in her personal growth and development than to give of her time, energy and resources to participate in these events. Indeed, she attends as many of these amazing forums as she can.
A LINK IS NO DRAMA QUEEN

A Link defuses drama; she does not cause or participate in it. A Link is authentic and she has integrity. She faces those matters that need facing in a direct manner. She does not hold things in and allow them to smolder and fester until the fight breaks out.

A Link is forthright. She does not work through hidden agendas. She knows she does
not need “attitude” for it never leads to effective problem resolutions. In fact, having an attitude only makes her appear small and shallow. Therefore, she tackles issues head on and straight up, and emerges in a win-win mode. Because a Link is not into drama, she is welcome in any circle. Others love to be around her.

Want to see what I mean? Look below at how genuinely happy they are to see you.
A LINK IS PEACE LOVING

A Link will always look for agreement and mutual harmony between those who have dissenting viewpoints. While she is not afraid of conflict, she knows that peace is the desirable state in which we can disagree with one another while showing respect and love toward each other. In the concept of Linkdom, she seeks synergy.

She maintains order and freedom from discontent by reconciling differences and bringing about tranquility through open dialogue and compromise.

A Link also seeks inner peace. She is fully aware of her feelings and knows how to keep herself in a peaceful state. Sometimes she rests or meditates, or gets a massage or reads.

Very often she reflects on what is really important in the grand scheme of things.
And she always keeps an attitude of gratitude which brings her serenity.

Plato, the great philosopher once said: "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle." A Link knows that kindness is the pathway to people’s hearts, especially when they are fighting their own battles.

In her own heart, she wants all to find peace and to experience positive and tranquil interactions with others.
A LINK IS SPIRITUAL

A Link is a loving and giving person who seeks oneness with the highest source of her being. She believes in garnering wisdom from that still, small voice that speaks to us all. This causes her words and deeds to be in alignment with her higher being.

As she ponders her life, a Link is thankful for the life force flowing through her body. This life force is unlimited and she cherishes it. She realizes it is the same life source that flows through all other living beings, and she feels a connection, indeed, a kinship, with every other living thing.
A LINK IS SPIRITUAL

A Link knows what is right and she lives her life accordingly. She finds endless comfort in the fact that when she retires each night, she has nothing about which to be ashamed, frightened, or feel badly. For every word and every deed she chose that day was genuine and heartfelt and done from the guidance of her higher consciousness.

And so it is.

THE END
(or perhaps THE BEGINNING)
What is a Link?

There are a great many qualities that define a Link. These have been just 26 of them. Remember...

“A LINK IS THE BEST WAY TO PROMOTE THE LINKS BRAND!”

What Is a Link was created by
Link Gladys Gossett Hankins, Chair, Central Area Organizational Effectiveness with assistance from Link Mercedes Henderson Miller, Co-Chair. Our gratitude to the following Links who proofed and edited What Is a Link:

Link Debbye Williams,
Queen City (OH) Chapter

Link Inez Y. Kaiser
Jackson County (MO) Chapter

Link Cheryl Whittington
Queen City (OH) Chapter
What Is a Link is produced by:

THE CENTRAL AREA
Excellence ~ Elegance ~ Ethics