

Developing Leadership: The Choice is *Yours*

With increasing competition, advances in technology and science, and more challenges in the marketplace, leadership has become unquestionably vital to the success of any organization, and an increasing number of organizations are investing time and dollars to educate, train and develop their leaders. As Jack Welch stated during his tenure with GE, “The day we screw up the people thing, this company is over.”

So what does it take to be an effective leader and are you one of them or will you become one of them? In the nature vs. nurture debate over whether leaders are born or if leadership can be learned and developed, an overwhelming amount of research now supports the latter. As Peter Drucker states, “Leaders grow, they are not made...Leadership is...the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations.” By understanding the traits of a successful leader and knowing where you are on those traits, you are in a good position to be able to manage your behavior in a way that enables you to provide the right kind of leadership for any situation.

Let’s look at the leadership challenges facing the following three individuals and see how they might overcome their normal limitations.

Jim has always been extremely achievement oriented and excelled at most of his endeavors. This has allowed him to quickly rise through the corporate ranks and he is currently in a very enviable position with a bright future. So – what is the problem?

Well, Jim feels “tight” inside on a daily basis. He micromanages his staff and snaps at his wife and kids. He has to continually “rise to the occasion” when he is called into meetings on the spur of the moment and is required to make presentations with very little forewarning. With his organizational skills and keen product knowledge, things turn out okay, but he is churning inside and no amount of exercise, vacations, or martinis seem to quiet this feeling of fear. What does he have to worry about? Why does he feel so insecure? Why can’t he be content? What is going to happen? Could he handle another promotion if he got one?

On one hand, Jim probably has low self-confidence, low composure, high control, and low contentment traits, which contribute to his pessimism. On the other hand, he also has high achievement orientation, high sociability, and high organizational traits, which enable him to always land on his feet. Over time, however, his continuing feelings of restlessness, insecurity, and angst will more than likely contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, depression — or just lousy relationships and constant fear of failure. Is this what life is all about?

Celeste has extensive education and experience in technology. She has excellent programming skills and knowledge. Her background has allowed her to provide some impressive results under extremely tight deadlines. All this hard work late into the night, time away from her family and friends and excruciating stress is finally paying off: Celeste gets promoted to Team Leader for a special new developmental project! Deadlines are tight — but that is nothing new!

Six months into the project, Celeste is feeling exhausted, frustrated, insecure, and angry. She is short-tempered with her team members and even more so at home with her family. Her days seem crowded with an endless string of meetings, and yet nothing seems to get accomplished. There are meetings to discuss how to start, meetings to clarify expectations, meetings to resolve conflict, and more meetings to schedule meetings. Dealing with team members is increasingly difficult — some need too much direct supervision and others are completely uncooperative. Celeste is working more, enjoying it less, and wondering if this promotion was all it was cracked up to be. She longs for the “good ole days.”

You see, the personality traits that helped Celeste excel in the technology arena — her organizational skills, attention to detail, independence, and the ability to work well with “things” rather than “people” — enhanced her ability to succeed as a programmer. Those traits are what got her promoted, but those traits alone are not enough to ensure success in her new role. In order to excel as a Team Leader, she now needs those traits that relate to interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, assertiveness, optimism and self-confidence.

Dave is outgoing and enthusiastic. He breaks most sales records, and his clients love him. He is constantly meeting new people and always quick to mention those products he sells. He is a “selling sensation,” and in no time at all, he is promoted to Sales Manager! WOW — less travel, more time with his family, more golf — plus more time to get caught up in the office. This is great!

However, three months into this new role, Dave is driving his co-workers, family and friends NUTS! He talks incessantly, often about nothing. His constant talking and presence feels like micromanagement to those he is managing. They can’t get their calls made because he is hovering and “coaching” them with specifics on how he would handle this situation and it would inevitably end in a sale. Dave starts to feel corralled. He doesn’t seem to sense the same satisfaction from his new role. His success seems more dependent on the success of those he is managing, and he isn’t sure he likes that. They aren’t selling as well as he could. What is he going to do?

Well, Dave is probably high in traits relating to sociability, boldness, exhibition, self-confidence, optimism, endurance, and nurturance. All of these traits might be vital to sales success, but maybe not as helpful in an office environment when you are overwhelming your co-workers and smothering family and friends. His

inability to work alone causes him to call more and more meetings just to have social interaction and sales quotas are suffering — but that is what they are meeting about! The Sales Manager is disrupting time to sell!

But remember, there is hope. **Leadership can be developed.** So where do we start? Before Jim has a heart attack or gets to the end of his career with very little enjoyment over his successes, before Celeste quits and they lose an extraordinary employee, or Dave gets fired and his organization loses a fantastic top seller, can we develop them as successful leaders? First, let's find out what are thought to be the key traits of a successful leader.

Over the past several years, one of the most important contributions the field of psychology has made to the field of business has been in determining the key traits of successful leaders. Various psychological tests and assessments have been used to determine what traits are most common among these successful leaders. This list of traits may then be used to help managers gain insight into their strengths and their areas that are in need of further development. This enables them to grow and hone their leadership skills.

Raymond Cattell, a pioneer in the field of personality assessment, derived the five Global Factors of personality in the 1960s and is considered by many to be the “father of the Big 5” Global Factors commonly used today. However, his work with the sixteen more specific primary personality scales have been found to predict behavior better and formed the basis for our flagship assessment, *The Winslow*. It is this work that is still referred to today to determine the traits which characterize a successful leader. These traits include:

- **Emotional Stability:** Good leaders must be able to tolerate frustration and stress. They must be well-adjusted and have the psychological maturity to deal with anything they are requested to face.
- **Dominance:** Leaders are often times competitive and decisive and usually enjoy overcoming obstacles. They are assertive in their thinking style as well as their attitude in dealing with others.
- **Enthusiasm:** Leaders are usually seen as active, expressive and energetic. They are often very optimistic and open to change. Overall, they are generally quick and alert and tend to be uninhibited.
- **Conscientiousness:** Leaders are often dominated by a sense of duty and tend to be very exacting in character. They usually have a very high standard of excellence and an inward desire to do one's best. They also have a need for order and tend to be very self-disciplined.
- **Social Boldness:** Leaders tend to be spontaneous risk-takers. They are usually socially aggressive and generally thick-skinned. Overall, they are responsive to others and tend to be high in emotional stamina.
- **Tough-mindedness:** Good leaders are practical, logical, and to-the-point. They tend to be low in sentimental attachments and comfortable

- with criticism. They are usually insensitive to hardship and overall are very poised.
- **Self-assurance:** Self-confidence and resiliency are common traits among leaders. They tend to have little or no need for approval. They are generally secure and free from guilt and are usually unaffected by prior mistakes or failures.
 - **Compulsiveness:** Leaders were found to be controlled and very precise in their social interactions. Overall, they were very protective of their integrity and reputation and consequently tended to be socially aware and careful, abundant in foresight, and very careful when making decisions or determining specific actions. (SBA.gov)

In addition to those traits outlined by Cattell, today's leaders must have team orientation, high energy, optimism, and emotional intelligence — just to name a few. Various theories continue to emerge on which traits are most important, how many we should focus on, what they should be named, complicated ways they should be combined and the best way to develop those most important to successful leadership. Those traits relating to relationship building and emotional intelligence continue to gain attention and respect.

Daniel Goleman's research in 1998 outlines the Emotional Competence Framework which identifies five keys to leader development: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Goleman states, "knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions" and "managing one's internal stages, impulses, and resources" are foundational to success. So, *knowing* — "self-awareness" and *managing* — "self-management" are key to leadership development. Both are up to each of us individually...our choice.

A recent study on Leadership, Emotional Intelligence and Personality Type** with 265 leaders (one-third executives, one-third directors, and one-third primarily business owners and consultants) found that leaders now consider emotional intelligence competencies such as relationship building and adaptability to be more important to leadership success than traditional leadership competencies such as planning and financial acumen. The first major implication of this study was that individual leaders can increase their potential for success by mastering the most highly valued competencies, including building relationships, developing people, thinking strategically, offering vision, executing work, taking initiative and fostering teamwork. The second implication was that to excel at these highly ranked competencies, leaders also need to focus on the emotional intelligent building block competencies of self-awareness, empathy and adaptability. This same study showed that leaders may underestimate the importance of these basics.

Research has found that an underlying dynamic — self-awareness — facilitates both empathy and self-management, two factors which in combination allow effective relationship management. Thus, successful leadership development

builds from this foundation of self-awareness. **(Primal Leadership)** It is very similar to taking a trip — if you don't know where you are — you do not know which way to go to get to where you want to go. If you do not recognize your own areas of strength and areas of concern, you will be poor at understanding and managing those areas in others and, as a result, be inept at helping coach others to develop and improve. Once leaders understand their own strengths and abilities, as well as perceive and understand those of others, their leadership skills skyrocket!

In the book, *Primal Leadership*, the authors refer to the crux of leadership development that works as *self-directed learning*: intentionally developing or strengthening an aspect of who you are or who you want to be, or both. They refer to a model of learning developed by Richard Boyatzis, in which people who successfully grow and change in *sustainable* ways cycle through the following five discovery stages:

- *The **First** Discovery*: My ideal self – Who do I want to be?
- *The **Second** Discovery*: My real self – Who am I? What are my strengths and gaps?
- *The **Third** Discovery*: My learning agenda – How can I build my strengths while reducing my gaps?
- *The **Fourth** Discovery*: Experimenting with and practicing new business, thoughts and feelings to the point of mastery.
- *The **Fifth** Discovery*: Developing supportive and trusting relationships that make change possible.

Today, it takes a combination of many traits to excel as a leader. Leaders today need to be educated, have vision, excel in their industry, exude emotional intelligence and be both learners and teachers. They need a strong sense of ethics, commitment and the ability to live their values. Leaders now need to be able to be both collaborators and commanders and have the judgment to know when to be which. Adaptability to increase effectiveness is key in this age of constant change.

But the good news is that leaders can be developed. You can improve in your leadership ability today. You can grow into one of tomorrow's great leaders. The choice is yours. Robert Sternberg, in his book, *Successful Intelligence: How Practical and Creative Intelligence Determine Success in Life* states, "People who succeed...know their strengths; they know their weaknesses. They capitalize on their strengths; they compensate for or correct their weaknesses. That's it!"

With over 35 years of experience in this arena, we have seen many of these theories come and go. We offer an assessment for individuals and organizations that has staying power and yet is current and consistent. What we have found is that our flagship assessment and the twenty-four personality traits assessed in

four categories (including Interpersonal, Organizational, Dedication and Self-control) enables participants to gain the most insight in a simple yet effective manner to enhance their self-awareness and self-managed development. As one of the only assessments that guarantees the most accurate and objective results, we can confidently help individuals and organizations to maximize their potential for success. We strongly recommend individuals and organizations participate only in highly credible assessment programs with built-in validity controls so that selection and development programs are not based on invalid, nor partially skewed results.

Leadership today takes keen self-awareness and strong self-management skills as never before. A successful leader at times must be a good team member and at other times, must lead the team.

The US Olympic Hockey Team that beat the Russian team in the 1980 Olympic Games was developed with top performers who also had individual and team leadership abilities. The test used to assess these athletes to determine their personality traits was the predecessor to **The Winslow**. Still used today, many professional athletic teams are developed with this knowledge from a well-developed assessment so that the individual athletes know what to concentrate on to grow and develop, their coaches know how to help them improve and maximize their potential and it ends up being a win all the way around. The point is that at times we need superstars to work together, to support each other so that the sum is greater than the parts. At other times, we need leaders to “step up” and lead. Knowledge of traits, self-awareness are paramount so successful leaders can read themselves and others and make these vital self-management decisions to increase their effectiveness as a leader – today *and* tomorrow.

Remember Jim, Celeste and Dave? They all decided to go through our assessment/coaching program to increase their self-awareness and develop a learning agenda that would enhance their self-management and potential for success as leaders. Today, Jim is leading a global organization, experiencing better health and enjoying his success both on and off the job. Celeste’s team successfully completed the new development project within the timeframe and on budget. She is leading another team on another project, but enjoying it more this time! Dave approached his COO and asked to return to the sales team so he could “be a round peg in a round hole.” He proposed the job description, the commission schedule and the incentives and ended up with a more horizontal promotion that fit his personality traits. He is back to being a Sales Leader.

In their book, *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan discuss the need for leaders with emotional fortitude to be able to *execute*, which must be the major job of a business leader. They state, “Emotional fortitude comes from self-discovery and self-mastery. Good leaders learn their strengths and weaknesses; especially in dealing with other people, then build on their strengths and correct their weaknesses. They earn their

leadership when the followers see their inner strength, inner confidence, and ability to help team members deliver results, while at the same time expanding their own capabilities.”

Knowing their strengths and weaknesses, and approaching their work accordingly, was a competence found in virtually every star performer in a study of several hundred “knowledge workers” — computer scientists, auditors and the like — at companies including AT&T and 3M done by Janet Caplan and Robert Kelley of Carnegie-Mellon University. From their findings, Robert Kelley states, “stars know themselves well.” (p. 347 of Goleman, *Working with . . .*)

So remember, there is hope! You, too, can continue to grow and develop your leadership skills. The first step is self-awareness. A self reporting assessment such as **The Winslow*** is a vital first step in this self-awareness process. Then, combining this new self-knowledge with an individualized action plan developed with a knowledgeable coach or mentor allows you to set your learning and development agenda, become consistently accountable, and chart your progress toward becoming a success leader. For sustainable results – try to follow Boyatzis’ five discoveries stated earlier in this article – and experience self-directed learning.

To maximize your leadership potential, start the journey of **self-awareness** and **self-management** now. Assess your personality traits and find out where your strengths could be developed further and how to manage your “gaps” out of the way. Become the leader *beyond* your normal limitations – for today and tomorrow. Maximize your leadership potential. Remember...the choice is yours – choose to make a greater difference.

As a participant in the 2004 Luminary Series, order one of the Winslow Assessments and receive a discount when you refer to Code LUMA. To order or for more information contact Services for Success, Inc. at (877) 709-9775 or www.ServicesforSuccess.com.