

## LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

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### THE VERSATILE LEADER.

The Paradoxical Qualities that Separate Leaders from Everyone Else.

Leadership is a complex issue today, more so than it was 25 years ago. Today's leaders must make the effort to blend some often paradoxical qualities; they need to be both tough and tender. I call them "velvet covered bricks."

This article will enable you to evaluate yourself in light of the qualities that separate leaders from everyone else. It was inspired by Fast Company magazine, and represents dozens of interviews with CEOs, ministers and college deans who are big-picture thinkers and activists. Below is part one of the findings. Next month, I will send you part two.

### THE UNIQUE BLEND

1. Leaders are both confident and modest. Sure, you need a healthy ego to lead, but you also need to be strong enough to check it at the door. Being a leader is not about making yourself more powerful. It's about making the people around you more powerful. People follow leaders who have a healthy sense of self worth, but who see beyond themselves and are humbled by their responsibility.

Evaluation: Do I check my ego at the door? Can I see beyond my own ideas?

(Ego driven) 1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10..(Ego controlled)

2. Leaders are authentic and they lead from principle.

You earn the trust and respect of the people you work with when you know who you are, and you walk the talk. Who believes in leaders who don't believe in themselves? People need to see that you are genuine and human. At the same time, you must lead from principles that are bigger than you are. Character, not feelings are what govern your behavior and decisions. It is a principle-driven identity.

"Truly authentic leaders are open both to their gifts and to their underdeveloped qualities. People who understand who they are tend to have a more powerful voice and to make a more profound contribution to an enterprise. Get in the habit of asking yourself two crucial questions: 'Why do I pursue the work and the life that I do?' and 'What do I act like during the most fulfilling times of my life?'" Kevin Cashman (Founder and CEO of Leadersource)

Evaluation: Do I lead from a genuine commitment to my core values and principles?

(Contrived)..1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9 .....10 (Authentic)

3. Leaders are listeners and they communicate passion.

Great listening is fueled by curiosity. It is hard to be a great listener if you're not curious about other people. What's the enemy of curiosity? Grandiosity, the belief that you have all the answers. At the same time, our listening should generate an opportunity to communicate in a relevant fashion. Once we understand our team and our clients, we are more apt to communicate vision to them on their wave-length. Leaders have the ability to hear from their team, then synthesize the wisest strategy based on what is best for the whole.

"In most organizations today, ideas still come from the top. Soon after arriving at this command, I realized that the young folks on this ship are smart and talented. And I realized that my job was to listen aggressively, to pick up all of the ideas that they had for improving how we operate.

The most important thing that a captain can do is to see the ship from the eyes of the crew." D. Michael Abrashoff, U.S. Navy

Evaluation: Do I listen well? Does my listening produce relevant communication?

(Poor listener) 1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9 .....10..(Extraordinary listener to new ideas)

Poor listeners often miss extraordinary ideas...

4. Leaders are good at giving encouragement, and they are never satisfied. Leaders are always raising the stakes of the game for themselves and for people. That means they are always testing and building both courage and stamina throughout the organization.

This is a rare combination. We often believe that a leader is either a good encourager or a dissatisfied person. Not true. Effective leaders master the art of encouraging their people and affirming their work. Ultimately capable leaders call out even greater performances from their people because they so believe in the abilities of those folks.

Sometimes the most tangible motivation comes from a passionate leader who positively expresses his or her dissatisfaction in the company's status, believing that everyone there can take it to another level.

Evaluation: Have I mastered the art of being a dissatisfied encourager?

(I can do one or the other. 1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10 (I can do both equally well))

I can do one, or I can do both, equally well

5. Leaders are trailblazers and they make unexpected connections. They organize and lead conversations among people who don't normally interact with each other, and they see the kinds of patterns that allow for small innovations and breakthrough ideas. Although they are out in front of most everybody, they never fail to spot a connection with a key person who can add value to the team.

In fact, the reason they are able to connect people that normally don't interact is because of their influence. They can get people together that would not have chosen to spend time partnering.

"No leader can possibly have all the answers& The actual solutions about how best to meet the challenges of the moment have to be made by the people closest to the action& The leader has to find the way to empower these frontline people, to challenge them, to provide them with the resources they need, and then to hold them accountable. As they struggle with& this challenge, the leader becomes their coach, teacher, and facilitator. Change how you define leadership, and you change how you run a company." Steve Miller (Group Managing Director, Royal Dutch/Shell)

Evaluation: Do I identify and connect with key people as I pioneer new trails?

(Miss opportunities) 1.....2.....3 .....4.....5.....6.....7.....8 .....9.....10 (capitalize on opportunities)

I miss opportunities:

I capitalize on opportunities:

6. Leaders are sensitive to the trends of culture and they provide direction. Change happens so quickly in our culture that a leader would be unwise to fail to keep their ear to the ground. At the same time, they are not hesitant to provide direction when it is time. This is different than

providing answers. No single leader is smart enough to know everything about where markets are going, how technology is changing, and what competitors are plotting. But smart leaders do know how to pose revealing questions. This quality requires the leader to walk a fine line between becoming a paranoid "survey taker" and a self-sufficient know-it-all.

Important reminder: You're not in control, and you're not really in charge, but you are in touch, and you are out in front.

Evaluation: Do I read my culture well? Can I summarize what I discover and determine a path based on what I find?

(difficult to stay on the cutting edge) 1.....2 .....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8 .....9.....10. (I read then I lead)

7. Leaders protect their people from danger and they expose them to reality. The dirty little secret of life in organizations: most people want leaders to insulate them from change, rather than mobilize them to face it. That's why leadership is so dangerous. People long to have a leader who will take all the heat, and protect their people and their department when the going gets rough. Good leaders are able to both protect them from danger that would keep them from reaching their objectives, yet at the same time expose them to healthy doses of reality so everyone has a sense of the big picture and the stakes that are involved in every risk.

Evaluation: Do I both protect my people and expose my people to reality?

(Over protect/under expose). 1.....2 .....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8 .....9.....10... (Protect and expose in a healthy way)