

EA Insights



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In This Issue

[Secrets of Leadership Success](#)

[Complimentary Strategy Session](#)

["Quotes"](#)

Quick Links

[EA Home Page](#)

[About Us](#)

[News](#)

[Contact Us](#)



"Quotes"

"Leadership should be born out of the understanding of the needs of those who would be affected by it."

~Marian Anderson

"Reappraise the past, re-evaluate where we've been, clarify where we are, and predict or anticipate where we are headed..."

~Toni Cade Bambara

Dear Friend,

And, the Position Goes to...

"Did you hear the news? Joe's retiring! I wonder who's going to get his position."

It usually starts in familiar ways. A leader retires, or leaves, or gets promoted. Occasionally, a new position is created.

However it occurs, a void exists (or soon will). Unless reorganization is afoot, it's a void to be filled. And, that's when the challenges begin. Who gets the position?

"Helen's got seniority; it's her turn."

"Fred is an exceptional worker. He should get it."

"Renee is Joe's #2; she's got to be the choice."

"Sarah had a position like that at her old company. She can do the job."

"Leo's the boss' brother-in-law. Need I say more?"

Quite frankly, none of these is a strong basis for the selection decision. So, if this isn't it, what does make an effective leader?

Whether you're someone who's considering vying for an open position (now or in the future), or you're the person responsible for the hiring decision, you should find this edition of **EA Insights** of interest. This month, we explore five critical functions for successful leadership. We hope this material will help you evaluate where you, or your candidates, stand regarding leadership ability, and thereby assist you to make informed decisions about open positions. We also expect that this edition will give both current and prospective leaders ideas regarding leadership function areas to leverage further or to strengthen in an effort to increase results and role satisfaction.

And, as always, you need not undertake assessment and/or skill-building on your own. Don't hesitate to call on your friends at Executive Advantage to support your efforts!

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

Secrets of Leadership Success

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So, there's a leadership position open. Are you a strong candidate? Or, if you're the one with hiring responsibility, how do you select the right person for the job?

Too often, people are chosen for leadership positions -- as supervisors, managers, or even executives -- for the wrong reasons. Okay, the person may be well-credentialed, or a super worker, or long-tenured, or connected. But, can he be a *leader* for the organization? And, what does effective leadership entail?

Below are five functions unique to the leadership role that should be at the top of any set of decision criteria. In fact, these responsibilities really should be central to any leader's position description and a starting point for the ongoing evaluation of leadership effectiveness.

Planning -- A successful leader is able to assess the internal and external landscape and use that information to chart a course for the organization, department, or team. To do that, the person must understand the organizational mission and overall goals as well as the part her function area plays in achieving them. Further, the effective leader can make the leap from theory to action; she is able both to develop and implement function area goals that are designed to advance the overarching strategy.

Positioning -- One description of a leader's *positioning* function is that, when wearing this hat, his job is to prevent his team from becoming frustrated in trying to perform its assigned tasks. A successful candidate will be able to turn his attention, with plan (or plan framework) in hand, to preparing the work environment so that staff actually can carry out the responsibilities charged to them. He is an advocate or producer, as required, ensuring that the team has the resources it needs -- facilities, equipment, supplies, technical support, etc. -- to get the job done. This aspect of leadership also involves the continual monitoring of schedules, workflow, assignments, and customer or other feedback to make certain that the work is happening in the right way, at the right time, by the right people. Essentially, *positioning* entails organizing the environment, as well as the energies and efforts of the team, to produce results.

Staffing -- Leaders are successful when they can build a team that complements the task to be accomplished. So, clearly, one aspect of this function is the candidate's ability to identify the roles to be played and to select people with suitable skills, abilities, and dispositions to assume those positions. It goes beyond just picking people, though. A strong leader will "learn" her team -- personalities, strengths, challenges, patterns, etc. -- and will apply that information in order to assign tasks, to cross-train, to identify gaps, and to make other decisions that will enable the team to work most efficiently and effectively for the long term.

Directing -- A strong leadership candidate will understand and operate from the perspective that people are important. In many respects, that's at the heart of the *directing* function. A strategist is great. A resource whiz can be a real benefit to an organization. A staffing guru's wonderful. But, if the person in charge can't get people to produce, it's all for naught. Consequently, paying attention to the *directing* role is critical. An ideal candidate will be a coach, teaching people how to do their jobs correctly, creating an environment with reasonable and appropriate limits, and encouraging team members to stretch and grow. He'll be a motivator, discovering what matters to each person on the team and helping each one to develop individual goals both to address the person's own desires and to meet broader expectations. Further, he'll be an honest and a frequent communicator, developing and maintaining the type of trust that results in team cohesion and accomplishments.

"Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality."

~Warren G. Bennis

"An empowered organization is one in which individuals have the knowledge, skill, desire, and opportunity to personally succeed in a way that leads to collective organizational success."

~Stephen R. Covey

"The Pertinent Question is NOT how to do things right -- but how to find the right things to do, and to concentrate resources and efforts on them."

~Peter F. Drucker

"There are no reluctant leaders. A real leader must really want the job.... If you find the need for a leader and have to coax or urge your selection, you'll be well advised to pass him over. He's not the man you need."

~Ira C. Eaker

"The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision. It's got to be a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion. You can't blow an uncertain trumpet."

Evaluating -- Some people are afraid of evaluation. However, a successful leader will grasp its value and exercise it in a way that's healthy and not dreaded. Now, this doesn't mean walking around with a clipboard and visor, and fostering an atmosphere of constant scrutiny. Instead, it's incorporating evaluation into processes as a natural part. It's inviting staff (in formal and informal ways) to provide feedback on processes, functions, and resources. And, it's offering ongoing opportunities for team and individual self-assessment as well as for active involvement in solution development.

A leadership candidate, who is enthusiastically and continually developing in these five functional areas, paves the way for inclusion, commitment, innovation, quality, and satisfaction (internal and external) -- all of which serve to make a team, department, or organization strong.

So, who's the right person to fill that leadership chair in your organization?

~Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh

"Many managers know how to get things done through people, to turn people into tools, but not how to direct them, inspire them, or motivate them. Leadership provides a scenario to the people they're leading. People are willing to work their butts off if you give them an objective, show them how to reach it, and prove that you mean it through action and consistency."

~John Music

"No person can be a great leader unless he takes genuine joy in the successes of those under him."

~W. A. Nance

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