

What Makes a Business Leader?

Strategy is central to the world of business but it is rarely discussed in the context of individuals where it is equally important as a central part personal leadership.

Steve Tappin, co-author with Andrew Cave of the book “The Secrets of CEOs”, said in a recent broadcast that out of 150 business leaders that he interviewed 75% of them were operating as managers and not leaders. Until recently Steve was the Managing Partner of a division of Heidrick & Struggles where he acted as a trusted confidant to his global CEO clients, so he should know! Researching The Secrets of CEOs with 150 Global Chief Executives convinced him that combining business and personal leadership for CEOs, top teams and the whole business was critical to success.

In reality there is an industry which is at least 40 years old which is built on the premise that successful business leadership requires successful personal leadership, this is the whole thrust of programmes run by Leadership Management International (LMI®) which puts personal leadership at the core of its process. You start out on the road of effective personal leadership when you develop your personal strategy and begin to act on it, your strategy is your game plan for success and it's unlikely to be effective unless it is built on a solid understanding of mission values and vision.

Your values are your timeless guiding principles and it is often easier to know when they're offended rather than to articulate them. Whether you're the CEO of a large enterprise or an owner driver running a small business, it will be very uncomfortable to be running a business where your values and those of the business do not overlap.

Your mission is your core purpose, the distillation of your dreams, your hopes and ambitions: unlike your values this will change over time dependent on your experiences. For some people, it is mainly their work that fulfils their mission, whilst at the other end of the spectrum work is a necessary inconvenience that allows them to fulfil the mission. There is a whole industry helping people to lead a balanced life, but I would argue that the issue is less about balance than knowing what you want to do and be and why. When you know where you stand, what your values are, and what your mission is, you will be able to create a picture of your future, this is your vision.

Values, mission and vision are the three core elements you must have in place to create the effective strategy that is your game plan for life. Sensibly you should probably have a strategy for your health, learning, family, social interests as well as for your financial wellbeing.

Can you arrive at this point alone? Probably not, we are all brought up in a world of conflicting values and consciously arriving at the point where your values are sufficiently in place to provide the bedrock on which you will build your strategies, exercise your personal leadership, and go on to give business leadership, will need a catalyst. That might be a friend, a mentor or something more structured like an LMI® Effective Leadership Programme.

If the best business leaders are those who have well-developed personal leadership characteristics, then recruitment and training should take account of this. If personal leadership is not being obviously exhibited by a leader then the development programme should be put in place. The positive results of business leaders with strong personal leadership qualities are not well catalogued but there are many current examples of companies that have fallen from grace because of some personal failure of leadership level. This facet of leadership is just one of four key elements essential to any leadership development, developing leaders with a fragmented approach focusing on one or two facets of leadership believing that this will be sufficient is not enough.

Trying to develop leaders this way is like trying to become a professional golfer by only practicing your putting. The best golfers are total golfers, they excel at driving, approach shots, sand shots, pitching, chipping and putting. They also possess the confidence and mental strength to perform in the heat of competition.

The best leaders are Total Leaders; they excel in all the facets of leadership.

The Total Leader™ Concept has identified four critically important areas that a person must master to become a Total Leader.

Personal Productivity

The ability to manage yourself, manage your time and manage your priorities to operate at maximum effectiveness.

Personal Leadership

The ability to lead yourself, to be a leader of your own life.

Personal leaders determine the life they want, and then through planning and action make it happen.

Motivational Leadership

The ability to lead and motivate others.

A motivational leader understands that people are the source of all progress and innovation, and thus the key to success in the 21st century. A motivational leader is able to help people develop and utilise more of their full potential.

Strategic Leadership

The ability to lead an organisation.

A strategic leader is able to define and develop the purpose and vision of the organisation, the key strategies, the optimum structure, the right people in the right roles, and the most effective processes for an organisation to succeed.

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