

Mentoring the Five Elements of Effective Executive Leadership

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This paper explores the process involved in effective executive mentoring. The author will explain the difference between the typical leader and the new emerging concept of the Level 5 mentor leader. The paper will also describe in detail the five factors essential to an effective mentor leader and provide some supporting research for the selection of these factors. Also discussed will be the use of Lepper's 5C approach to mentoring and how this can be used for executive development by mentor leaders of new mentor leaders. The author will also provide some ideas regarding inexpensive but effective tools for assessment of leadership development needs and also resources that can be used for coaching.

"The organization failed because it had too many effective leaders!"

Somehow I don't believe we will ever read this headline. The problem with all types of organizations today is not too many effective leaders but too few effective leaders. I believe part of the problem is how we often have defined effective leadership. We have passed through several phases in learning to define what is called great leadership. Once it was thought that character traits made up great leaders. Then the Ohio State University studies by Blake and Mouton in the 1960's popularized the idea that it was leadership behavior, namely a combination of concern for results and relationships (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Then in the 70's Hersey and Blanchard popularized the idea that it was more the leader's ability to adjust to the situation a leader finds him or herself in and the audience, those we are leading (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). All of these ways of defining leadership led to a lot of well-intentioned but expensive seminars, and arguably to little improvement in leadership.

Then in the book *Good to Great*, based on research originally conducted at Stanford University School of Business, Jim Collins and his team described what they call Level 5 leaders. These were the leaders that stood out as getting sustainable results over the years and also leaving a huge impact on their highly effective organizations. Collins describes the Level 5 leaders in the most effective organizations as behaving as follows: The Level 5 leaders:

- Model a paradoxical mix of personal humility and professional will
- Display a compelling modesty, are self effacing and understated.
- Attribute success to factors other than themselves
- Display a workmanlike diligence—more plow horse than show horse.
- Set up their successors for even greater success. (Collins, 2001)

This is quite a contrast to the high flyer superstars so often highlighted as great leaders by our celebrity focused media. As a matter of fact, most of the leaders of the great companies were not household names, and only a few had books written about them.

What is really remarkable about these Level 5 leaders is that they typify what Tony Dungy, former Super Bowl winning coach of Indianapolis Colts fame, has come to call the mentor leader. While he spends a great deal of time describing the mentor leader, I think we can summarize for our purposes three major aspects that really differentiate this type of leader from the rest.

- It is really not about them. They lead to add value to the lives of those they lead. They do every thing they can to benefit those they lead. They look for every opportunity to make a significant impact. They lead by example.
- They take a long-term perspective. They know an organization must get results to survive, but they also know that building and developing people for the long-run means tolerating some mistakes.
- Mentor leaders are focused on mentoring leaders who develop other mentor leaders. It is the ongoing legacy they are concerned about. (Dungy & Whitaker, 2010)

Another unique characteristic of these mentor leaders, as least as I observe them, is their efforts to intentionally mentor others in the skills needed to be a mentor leader. They engage in structured, customized mentoring designed to develop leadership skills in the people they lead. They closely follow a pattern first recognized by Mark Lepper and his colleagues in his studies on effective one-on-one interactions (Lepper & Wolverson, 2001). They found that in effective one-on-one interactions mentors follow what Lepper referred to as the 5 Cs. These are:

1. First you create a climate of control where the person being mentored feel they have input and command of the material and situation. It is a voluntary relationship, not a mandatory one. This builds commitment to the process.
2. Then you challenge the person being mentored, but at a level of that is within their capability.
3. You build confidence by helping them be successful and minimizing failure.
4. You engender curiosity by asking leading questions. Indeed lepper found most of what effective one-on-one leaders did was ask leading questions and then ask the participant for his or her reasoning.
5. Effective mentors also contextualize by using real world problems or case studies.

Of course the other important thing is for mentors to be nurturing or empathetic. Even though this initial research was done with younger students, we have found this same 5-C model works just as well with adults.

So what characteristics differentiate these level 5 mentor leaders? What traits or skills should we be developing as we mentor new mentor leaders? As I studied these traits and characteristics of Level 5 and mentor leaders over the years I believe there are five critical components that enable such leaders to be successful. These five elements are:

1. Adversity Quotient (AQ)
2. Emotional Quotient (EQ)
3. Strategic Judgment (SQ)
4. Coachable or teachable quotient (TI)
5. Execution Quotient (XQ)

Adversity Quotient

We could spend a lot of time discussing the early research by David McClelland of Harvard on achieving tendency and by Albert Mehrabian of UCLA on how to evaluate and measure achievement orientation. This subject has a long history of study, as it is seen as a missing link explaining why high IQ people don't always end up being high achieving people.

Research over the years has proven people have more control over life events than they may realize. The way a leader thinks and responds can have a dramatic influence over his or her future. Where some people or teams fail or quit others in a similar situation persist and succeed. The essential difference of high achievers and others is how they respond to adverse events. How much control do they perceive they have? How much influence do they believe they can have? How much responsibility are they willing to accept?

Adversity Quotient (AQ) is an attempt to measure how well a leader can hold up to adversity. Just how resilient is the leader? When he or she encounters an obstacle, do they optimistically take initiative, take ownership, and turn it into an opportunity? High AQ people do this. They thrive on challenge and are enthusiastic about goals. They are very persistent, highly adaptable, and flexible, and they do not give up easily. They also show the ability to delay gratification and take moderate, calculated risks.

Today's leading guru of AQ is Paul Stoltz who has synthesized much of the earlier research mentioned above and in conjunction with the Education Testing Service has created some reliable and valid measures of adversity quotient (Stoltz, 1997). While a high IQ might be useful it is no guarantee of success. Conversely, research by the experts above has strongly indicated that people who possess high AQ are much more likely to succeed.

What are some traits of high AQ leaders? We look for and want to develop: A leader who takes initiative, wants challenge, is enthusiastic, is an effective goal setter, is optimistic, flexible, persistent, delays gratification, and is a moderate risk taker.

Emotional Intelligence or People Skills (EQ or Emotional Quotient)

The term EQ is used to describe a person's ability to understand his or her own emotions and the emotions of others and to act appropriately based on this understanding. It is suggested a high score in this area will indicate that a leader can effectively navigate the challenging terrain of interpersonal relationships and build and sustain healthy and productive working relationships.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is a relatively recent behavioral model, rising to popularity and prominence with Daniel Goleman's 1995 Book 'Emotional Intelligence' (Goleman, 1995). The early Emotional Intelligence theory was originally developed during the 1970's and 80's by the research and writings of psychologists Howard Gardner (Harvard), Peter Salovey (Yale) and John Mayer (New Hampshire). Despite some people viewing it as 'pop' science at best, people in leadership roles view emotional Intelligence is increasingly relevant for leaders because of its implications for organizational development and the development of people. EQ principles provide a new way to understand and assess people's behaviors, management styles, attitudes, interpersonal skills, and potential.

Emotional Intelligence is also linked strongly with the concepts of the multiple forms of intelligence (MFI) theory developed by Howard Gardner (Gardner, 1993). This MFI theory illustrates and measures the wide range of thinking capabilities or intelligences people possess. Gardner has identified at least seven different forms of intelligence that successful people can choose to use. Interpersonal intelligence (people skills) and intrapersonal intelligence (understanding of ones self) are two of those seven forms and both are strong factors in emotional intelligence.

The EQ concept along with MFI argues that IQ, or conventional intelligence, is too narrow; and that there are wider areas of intelligence that dictate and enable how successful we are as leaders. Success requires more than just IQ (Intelligence Quotient), which has tended to be the traditional measure of intelligence, ignoring other essential behavioral and character elements. For example, we have all met people who are academically brilliant and yet are socially and inter-personally inept, unable to make decisions, frustrated and frozen by obstacles, or incapable of applying what they know. Research has repeatedly shown that possessing a high conventional IQ rating does not indicate success will automatically follow.

The essential premise of EQ is that to be a successful leader requires the effective awareness, control and management of one's own emotions, and those of other people. EQ embraces two important aspects of people skills: 1) Understanding and controlling your self; your goals, intentions, communication and listening style, impulses, responses, and approach to conflict management. 2) Understanding others, and their feelings.

In addition, Goleman in his synthesis of the research on EQ identified the five 'domains' of emotional intelligence as: 1) Knowing your emotions. 2) Managing your own emotions. 3) Motivating your self. 4) Recognizing and understanding other people's emotions. 5) Managing relationships, i.e., managing the emotions of others.

By developing our Emotional Intelligence in these EQ domains we can become more productive and successful at what we do as leaders. We can also help others to be more productive and successful too. Developing a higher level of emotional intelligence can reduce stress for individuals and organizations by decreasing conflict, improving relationships and understanding, and increasing stability, continuity and harmony within the organization.

What areas are measured by EQ? We want to see or develop such factors as: Projecting warmth and empathy, people orientation, effective communications and listening style, outgoing/extroversion, interpersonal relationship skills, helpfulness, and influencing skills among many other traits. We want to avoid or limit defensiveness and impulsiveness. Dealing with people can be like dancing with porcupines, or it can be the most delightful of experiences. What determines the difference are the people skills (EQ) of the leader.

Strategic Quotient (Judgment and decision making)

We define strategic quotient (SQ) as using judgment to discern pertinent data and then using that data to make effective and efficient decisions. This has been a greatly overlooked area of leadership until 2007 when Gordon Bennis and Noel Tichey, both noted researchers and consultants, published the book Judgment: How Winning Leaders Make Great Calls detailing the importance of this leadership skill (Tichey & Bennis, 2007). Edward De Bono has also contributed extensive research to this field, especially his comparison of linear to non-linear thinking and his work on the six different components of effective thinking (De Bono, 1985).

Any one who has been involved with leading people or organizations understands that the quality and often speed of decision making is critical to success. Excellent strategic judgment, the ability to make

great calls, on the part of the leader regarding people, processes, strategy, and/or crises is often the key factor determining the outcome of the entire effort. You can have great people skills and a high adversity quotient, and all the best knowledge, but without good judgment you won't succeed for long in executing your plans and getting results.

It is difficult enough for most people to make great judgment calls in fairly simple situations. But leaders often have to make tough calls when the stakes are very high and the right path ahead is far from obvious.

The good news is that a leader's SQ can be developed. In our mentoring programs we strive to help leaders develop a framework for evaluating problems and decisions, cooperating and collaborating with others, making the best possible call, and then following through on implementation to be sure the call is well executed. A leader also needs to learn when a deliberate decision is needed versus an on-the-spot speedy decision, and what the different process is for each. The best problem solvers are not only highly analytical, but also to learn to use their intuition. They also learn that the best decisions are often made by collaborating with peers and gaining diverse perspectives.

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying: "If you want to change the world, change the way you think." John Maxwell, a noted management guru says that to do well in life, we must first think well (Maxwell, 2003). In other words, changing and improving your thinking can indeed change your life. To be an effective leader you must assess your current way of thinking and find ways to improve it. You must also help the people you lead learn to be better thinkers. When you lift the SQ of the entire team, tremendous things happen.

Maxwell in *Thinking For A Change* lists several types of thinking critical to a leader. We like to share these with all of our leaders. Some of these include:

- Big-Picture Thinking-seeing the world beyond your own needs and how that leads to great ideas
- Focused Thinking-removing mental clutter and distractions to realize your full potential
- Creative Thinking-stepping out of the "box" and making breakthroughs
- Shared Thinking-working with others to compound results
- Reflective Thinking-looking at the past to gain a better understanding of the future

Our objective is not to create paralysis by analysis, but it is to encourage leaders to, whenever possible, think prior to taking action as a way to take the right action. Even when you have to make those on-the-spot decisions, hopefully you have done enough big picture and reflective thinking to reach a suitable solution. We also are encouraging leaders to realize there are many types of thinking, and while few people master all of them, we can try to improve in all of them. The end result should be better judgment calls regarding people, strategy, processes, and crises.

What are some traits involved in SQ? We look for and/or develop:

Analytical problem solving, the ability to analyze pitfalls and unanticipated consequences, use of intuition, collaborative thinking with peers, authentic listening, authoritative decision making, on-the-spot decision making, creative thinking, strategic thinking, and problem solving.

Teachable Index (How open to coaching and change is the leader?)

In our thirty years of mentoring leaders we have found that there is strong connection between how teachable or coachable leaders are and how successful they are. Those who are not teachable are also usually resistant to change. In today's quick changing environment, where the shelf-life of knowledge, solutions, and skills is very compressed, these two things can be a lethal combination. In a positive light, people who are teachable are usually very oriented to taking charge of change. They are versatile and adaptable. They are mentally agile and know they need to adapt to survive. They know there is a lot they don't know, and are eager to learn it!

What are some skills that make a leader more teachable? They are very good at active and authentic listening. When you can focus in on someone as if they are the only person in the world, it has an amazing affect. If you respond with few interruptions, and only clarifications, and show genuine interest you can learn some thing of value from almost any body.

They practice a relentless pursuit of reality? As a leader are you okay with looking inward and giving an honest report of what you see? Are you open to people providing you honest feedback, even when it hurts? How can somebody give you good performance feedback if you are not willing to see or hear what's there?

They have a deep commitment to authenticity and truth. You must be willing to listen, see, and feel the truth and always be honest with yourself, your teachers, and your coaches. You must be brave enough to tell them if you don't understand, or if what they are teaching isn't helping you. It is a matter of trust. You have to believe your leaders and teachers are usually teaching you for your best benefit.

They have a deep commitment to life long learning. Are you committed to continuous improvement? You must realize that life's greatest lessons seldom happen in a classroom. You must be responsible for your own continuous learning curve and development as a leader.

Execution Quotient (The ability to implement a vision or plan)

Execution Quotient or XQ is an indicator of the ability of a leader to close the execution gap between knowing and doing, goals and execution, and between promises and results. It helps evaluate how well the leader will do in executing or implementing new plans, procedures, or strategies. Head knowledge is wonderful, but can it be put into action? Larry Bossidy, former CEO of Allied Signal and then Honeywell, brought a lot of attention to the concept of Execution Quotient when he wrote the book *Execution* (Bossidy & Charan, 2003). In it he talks about how a leader must have a relentless pursuit of reality. The effective leader must cross the knowing doing, promise versus results gap and get things done. He or she must cut through the rituals and habits, and start doing the things that get results. Leaders with a high XQ have the ability to translate big thoughts into simple concrete action steps.

Remember having a high Execution Quotient does not mean you are micro-managing. It does mean you are actively involved in getting the right things done the right way. Ask yourself: Are the right people in the right places doing the right things? Do they know the expectations and what they are accountable for? Do they know who they must work with to get the results and how excellent performance will be recognized?

Few people choose to lose. While good leaders and high performers can no doubt learn from failure, repeated failure drains the energy from you and the team, and eventually it destroys. People prefer to win. High XQ leaders use these truths to lead by example and establish high XQ teams dedicated to learning and success.

What areas does XQ measure? As mentors what do we seek to develop? A translation of goals and vision into concrete action. Decision making, both deliberate and on-the-spot. Delegation, planning, and organization (of self, tasks, and teams). Influencing skills are also essential. Also the willingness to effectively enforce necessary rules and guidelines. Another key component is being able to enlist cooperation and engage enthusiasm of your team.

How do we measure these five factor characteristics so we know where to begin in the development process? In his book *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* Marshall Goldsmith outlines an excellent 360 degree process that he uses with a leader's leader, peers, and people who report in to the leader to determine development needs (Goldsmith & Reiter, 2007). We also use this quite effectively, rating the candidate on the various characteristics for each factor. We also recommend internet tools like the Predictive Index or the Harrison Assessment (www.harrisonassessments.com) that provide high validity and high reliability measures of the characteristics for each factor.

After you identify the development needs where do you find coaching materials? We use the Mindtools.com (www.mindtools.com) website to obtain excellent mentoring materials. For a minimal monthly charge you can gain access to a wealth of great articles, surveys and other tools. Also the FYI Lominger materials by Korn/Ferry cost around \$200 and have provided us with excellent materials. With only a small budget excellent mentoring materials are available!

Every organization needs excellent and effective leaders. We believe the Level 5 mentor leader model provides the means to select and develop them and build a leadership legacy into any organization.

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