



As seen in *Leadership Excellence*

Who can be leaders?

Few career managers make the cut

by Herb Greenberg, Ph.D. & Patrick Sweeney

How can you recognize when a manager has real leadership potential? As one client put it, managers *do things right*, while leaders *do the right things*.

He looks to managers as being implementers, and leaders as initiators.

The end of 2008 and all of 2009 will remain a painful memory for those of us who had to make difficult, yet necessary decisions. The world was changing, and we had to change with it in order to stay afloat.

Resources were limited everywhere we turned. Time was tight, and we were stretched thin. Yet, many of us prevailed. We stuck together and made the most of the hand we were dealt. And we've come out stronger than ever before.

And during that time, many leaders and managers were challenged like never before. Strengths that many of us thought we never had came to the surface and some of our limitations became more apparent as we found ourselves with our backs against the wall. But amidst the uncertainty and change – what are the makings of a true leader? What makes managers different from leaders, and which managers have the potential to become leaders?

In some ways it can be easier to pinpoint what a

manager does. We can list things like financial analysis or market planning or human resources management for that matter. Leaders, on the other hand, create visions. They are inspiring. They do not merely provide direction, but, create the music, orchestrate the resources and create environments where new achievements are realized.

While managers and leaders share many similar qualities, the performance of a manager carries far fewer risks than the performance of a leader. In addition, there seems to be a difference in the underlying motivational characteristics of these two groups.

This is not to say that everyone, at some given point in time, is not capable of leading. We believe that all of us can rise to the occasion, realize that this is our moment, and lead a crowd of people out of a burning building -- or answer some other immediate cause. All of us can lead situationally.

The difference with true leaders however, is that leading is part of who they are. It is part of their character, their style—it's a real, underlying sense of purpose.

In a recent Caliper study, more than 300 presidents and chief executive officers told us what they considered to be the most important – and the most difficult aspects – of being a leader.

Among the choices we asked them to rank were:

- *Creating the right vision*
- *Getting people to embrace that vision*
- *Maintaining momentum (motivating, influencing and persuading others)*
- *Managing change (strategic planning, problem solving)*
- *Surrounding oneself with the right people*
- *Developing staff (coaching, managing performance, transforming teams)*
- *Delegating authority*

Surrounding oneself with the right people was selected 41 percent of the time, second only to creating the right vision as one of the most critical parts of leadership. Surrounding oneself with the right people was also selected as one of the three most difficult aspects of being an effective leader—just behind maintaining momentum and developing staff.

These chief executives said there are three main factors that keep most managers from becoming leaders: not understanding others well enough, not solving problems quickly enough and not taking necessary risks.

We also asked the perennial question: Is leadership predominantly something you are born with or that you develop through experience?

These same chief executives told us they felt they were born with 40 percent of their leadership ability and developed the remaining 60 percent through experience.

What are the personality qualities that account for this 40 percent of innate leadership ability?

When we assessed the personality strengths of these chief executives, we found they were adept at influencing and directing others, skillful at building relationships and masterful at solving problems and making decisions. In essence, these leaders are extremely bright, assertive, driven to persuade, empathic and resilient. Having a need to get things accomplished, they are willing to take risks. They are also moderately sociable, demonstrate a healthy level of skepticism, and are motivated to come up with new ideas.

That's a very strong profile—which, we have found, most managers just don't measure up to. Instead,

most successful managers we have assessed are rather conservative. They succeed by working within established guidelines. Which is exactly why they were hired.

And therein lies the dilemma most companies face. How can potential leaders rise through the ranks of management? If they maintain the status quo, their leadership skills won't be recognized. If they rock the boat, other managers may feel threatened and try to subvert them.

Identifying and developing future leaders is one of the most important challenges facing chief executives today. Yet most organizations have a tendency to suffocate potential leaders.

You have to have leaders who are developed internally and working in a very focused manner on all levels toward the same goal. That begins with clarity in what a leader should be doing and also some self-awareness for each person to understand what they're great at and what they're not so good at.

Because leaders don't always have to have all the answers. True leadership is transparent. Leaders have to be able to say, "I need some assistance with this" and delegate to team members that complement their styles. With self-awareness, leaders are able to function in streamlined ways and, thus, the people around them will feel more engaged when they are looked to and trusted by their leaders.

Certainly a hallmark of an effective leader is to create a vision for the company's future. Essential to that vision is: recognizing the potential in future leaders; mentoring, coaching, and developing them; giving them responsibility early; and realizing that a very different type of leader may be needed for tomorrow than exists today. Because the leaders of tomorrow will be able to take their companies to new heights and greater lengths.

Herb Greenberg is the Founder and CEO of Caliper and **Patrick Sweeney** is the President of Caliper, a Princeton-based international management consulting firm, which, throughout the past half-century, has helped over 25,000 companies, from Fortune 500 to start-ups and everything in between, hire and develop top performers. For more information on Caliper, visit www.calipercorp.com.