Does Your Leadership Measure Up?

Benefits and Pitfalls of 3 Leadership Styles

By Barbara Trautlein, PhD

The top five leaders most admired by the world’s business executives are Winston Churchill, Steve Jobs, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Jack Welch – in that order, according to the 2013 Global CEO Survey conducted by PwC.

The qualities the surveyed CEOs most admired? Strong vision, motivational, caring, innovative, persistent and ethical. These results tell us a lot about what it takes to be a strong business leader in today’s rapidly changing global marketplace.

The respondents cited a broad range of qualities to describe the same individual leaders, which tells us they recognize that today’s leaders need a combination of strengths. Contemporary leaders must have a high CQ – Change Intelligence.

Today’s marketplace is in a state of constant change, and successful companies are those that can also respond and quickly adapt to the changes around them. That requires leaders who are able to lead with the head – focusing on the big-picture goal and business objectives; the heart – knowing how to engage, coach and motivate people; and with your hands – providing the tactical tools and skills necessary like a project manager.

People tend to be stronger in one or two of those areas and weaker in the others. We need to identify our weak areas and work on strengthening them. We need to ask ourselves: “Are you a head, heart or hands leader?"

Here are three of the seven CQ leader styles, their strengths, weaknesses, and a coaching suggestion for each.

The Coach (heart-dominant)

Strengths:

- Encourages people to join in discussions, decisions
- Steps in to resolve process problems, such as conflict
- Listens to all viewpoints
- Recognizes and praises others for their efforts
- Helps reduce stress by lightening the mood
Weaknesses:

- Sees team process and organizational climate as ends in themselves
- Fails to challenge or contradict others
- Does not recognize the importance of accomplishing tasks
- Overuses humor and other conflict-mitigation techniques
- Does not emphasize long-range planning

Coaching: Make connections with people but also connect them with the mission. Don’t allow engagement to take precedence over performance.

The Visionary (head-dominant)

Strengths:

- Stays focused on goals
- Engages in long-range thinking and planning
- Takes a big-picture view
- Enjoys seeing new possibilities
- Scans the horizon for the next big opportunity

Weaknesses:

- Doesn’t fully consider the effects a change will have on organizational culture
- May be less apt to focus on team members’ individual needs
- Complains about lack of progress toward goals
- Does not give sufficient attention to the process by which goals are met
- Neglects to ensure that the tactical details of the change process are handled

Coaching: It’s vital that the vision be shared by all those working to make it happen. Remember to share your vision with others (heart) and lay out a path to that vision that incorporates visible milestones along the way (hands).

The Executor (hands-dominant)

Strengths:

- Excels at project planning and execution
- Accomplishes tasks in a timely and efficient manner
- Can be depended upon to do what’s asked
- Freely shares information and materials so others have the training, tools and resources they need
- Pushes the team to set high performance standards
Weaknesses:

- Loses sight of the big picture – the goal of the change process
- Lacks patience with people and process issues
- Pushes for unrealistic performance standards
- Becomes impatient with other team members who don’t live up to standards
- Goes into data overload, providing too much detailed information.

Coaching: Expand your definition of “execution.” Engage people by making a compelling case for the change so you’ll have their support, and take time-outs periodically to evaluate your goals and strategy.

Most leaders are not all head, hands or heart – most are some combination, which is why there are seven Change Leader styles. And even leaders who have all three in seemingly equal measures have some pitfalls to watch out for.

The point is not to change who we are fundamentally, but rather to embrace our strengths, shore up our blindspots, and adapt our styles to be more effective when leading across a variety of different people and situations. By building their CQ, leaders simultaneously become more powerful to help their teams and organizations - as well as less stressed and frustrated themselves. And, they more consistently role model the pivotal leadership qualities CEOs most admire.
About the Author

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Barbara Trautlein is author of Change Intelligence: Use the Power of CQ to Lead Change that Sticks, and a change leadership consultant, international speaker and researcher. She helps all levels of leaders in achieving their personal and professional goals, from Fortune 50 companies to small- and mid-sized businesses, in industries ranging from steel mills to sales teams, refineries to retain, and healthcare to high tech. Trautlein has a PhD in organizational psychology from the University of Michigan and more than 25 years of experience helping businesses lead change. Learn more at www.ChangeCatalysts.com.