

LEADERS: MADE OR BORN?

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Are you a leader? The philosophical debate of the ages - are leaders made or born? Are leaders given innate characteristics in the womb which somehow bring them to a more natural position of leadership? If you commit to leadership training in books and conferences can you obtain the "right" skills and training to be a leader?

In our world today - a world of analysis and breakdown by generation - knowing how to work with Generation Y when you are a Baby Boomer has received much press, much study, and much attention. In a world where many of that same Generation Y are saying that they are still looking for a mentor, for a role model, for a leader to stand behind and grow with - are you that leader?

My fascination with leadership started a long time ago - back when I was in the military. Rather, it was my father who served our country, and it was me and my siblings who served my father - often feeling like we were young privates in his platoon. I wondered how it came to be that my dad was a recognized leader, a Captain, then a Major and a company commander. Not that I didn't find him worthy of the role, after all, he was my dad. My curiosity about leadership was bred out of the many troops we met at company picnics and the other required events happening on base. I always wondered why my dad was selected for those promotions and for those responsibilities.

I have read countless books on leadership - *The Seven Habits* series, *The Prophet*, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* among others too many to list here - and there is no doubt that the best of authors on the subject agree some leaders are born, some leaders are made. So, is it really an important question to ask if leaders are made or born? Is it a more important question to understand how leaders impact our lives, how they advance the direction of our world, both in the macro and the micro?

Whether born or cultivated, above all else, the most accomplished leaders adhere to six principles:

LIMITLESS FORWARD THINKING. Leaders of the top corporate environments are continually thinking about 'what's next'. It's hard to imagine the IBM senior manager that revealed to the world that "Computers will never be in our homes". We don't have his name, and I doubt he would give it at this point. Strong leaders are not looking at the limits of invention, creativity, or direction - they are imaging the impossible, and preparing the talented personnel to make it possible. Are you looking to the future of your law practice, of your law firm? What are the practice areas in your firm which are set for growth over the next 5 years? What are your financial projections in revenue and expenses, not only for this year, but the future as well?

EASE IN BEING WITH OTHERS. There is a charisma in leadership which is immediately apparent to those around it. Think of John Kennedy and his ability to talk with anyone with great ease. He quietly related to everyone on his staff, and encouraged them to bring their best performance to the day. We're seeing it again in Barack Obama, a charismatic messenger who delivers his speeches with a mesmerizing ease. That's not a measure of his performance, or a political statement of any kind. It's a point to ponder in your relationship with

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the people serving you, and ones you serve. How do your client relationships unfold? What about your relationships with staff members? Are you comfortable in your communications with them, and in their communications with you?

ACCEPTS RISKS FOR TEAM. A leader knows that risks are part of the limitless forward thinking. Challenging the commonly held theories and beliefs have brought us far - think of Christopher Columbus who inspired his crew to show the world was round, accept the risk that he could be wrong, and that they may sail off the side of the earth. He realized that taking the risk may have meant rewarding his crew for some failures. He understood that if the world was indeed flat, he would perish and so would his team. He took the risk. What risks are you taking? When is the last time you evaluated the profitability of your largest client? Of your flat fee structures? Do you know your break even rate? Do you accept clients without regard to these profitability measures? What about hiring to fit in your culture, and training your people for the performance you seek?

DELEGATE TO EMPOWER OTHERS. The best part of leadership is a clear acknowledgement that being responsible to others is not being responsible for others. As a leader in a service industry organization are you sharing responsibilities for success? You are responsible to those you work with and for to provide your best self every day. What project do you have on your desk right now that could be done by someone else in a successful manner? Yes, it might not be done in the *exact* manner which you would complete it, but would it be done competently by another member of your firm? Delegating is a learned behavior for most leaders. As you focus on limitless forward thinking, who do you see growing with your organization? Find tasks and projects to pass on to those people and encourage their creativity and energy toward whatever you have passed along.

EMPATHY FOR OTHERS. Leadership is not dictatorship. Leadership is focused on moving toward the future, but with realization that without a team to work with there is no leader. Understanding the human condition and relating to the necessity of flow between work and home are qualities that the 21st century is requiring of successful leaders. Empathy isn't succumbing to the story you are being told. Empathy isn't covering responsibilities for others as you dredge along with your day. Empathy is offering compassion and holding accountability for decisions and choices being made. How will you begin the design of your culture to include accountability and empathy?

RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISIONS MADE BY TEAM. Just as a leader assumes the risks involved when sailing off to the corners of the earth, good leaders also allow the team to make choices and experiment with creativity and ideas. The best leaders will stand for their team in those decisions, lending support or providing praise as the situation requires. Accepting the responsibility alongside the team for creative solutions that may have missed the mark is a critical element of being a leader. And, likewise, accepting the praise alongside the team when success is achieved is equally critical to the long term development of leadership. (and, by the way, a strong culture where people feel empowered to move the firm forward, offer solutions to problems, and create efficiencies. Who doesn't want *that?*)

SO, ARE YOU A LEADER?

Are you ready to advance your leadership skills and step into the future of your firm? Leadership skills may be delivered at birth or may have arrived via your various educational endeavors. If you want more leadership skills, strategic planning, or coaching for communication skills, I would be honored to talk with you

For more information and further reading on Leadership, visit our [online library](#).



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Judy understands teams. And she knows how to help you maximize the potential of yours. For over two decades, Judy has applied her vast knowledge of team dynamics, emotional intelligence, work/life balance, leadership, finance, and legal management to help law firms improve their people, process, performance and, ultimately, profits.

Bachelor's Degrees in Accounting and Physical Education | Master's Degree in Sports Management | Former Professional Athlete | Licensed Provider of Emotional Intelligence Tools | Certified Living Your Vision Facilitator | ALA Certified Legal Manager | ACE Certified Personal Trainer | ICF Professional Certified Coach

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