



*Building Competitive Companies Since 1946*

## Ten Observations on Successful Leadership

***For over 60 years, PSP psychologists have assessed and observed both successful and not so successful leaders. Here are 10 of the critical differences we have observed.***

1. Good leaders, by definition, are problem solvers. They are aware that they do not always have the best answer. They are, however, able to ask good questions and assimilate information from others and utilize the best ideas available.

2. Confident leaders understand that it is important not to compete with employees if they want employees to be honest and forthright with them. Otherwise, they will not talk openly about mistakes and problems.

3. Achieving success in any enterprise means identifying problems and making corrections. This requires candor about what is working and not working. The more successful companies simply recognize and solve problems more quickly, in part because their employees are not afraid of being the messenger with bad news.

4. More effective leaders ask others around them what they think, and then listen. They realize they do not have to agree or do it the employee's way but it is important to hear them out.

They also recognize it is important for the leader to let people know why they chose a different approach, thanking them for their input, and asking for their support.

5. Effective leaders do not take their success for granted; they realize the importance of continual change so that they can retain the ability to make contributions that count. Organizations change only when people change and executives set the direction and model the behaviors that others will follow.

6. Most organizations utilize a superficial process for selecting their leaders, paying more attention to prerequisite education and experience than the candidate's abilities and potential to get the job done. They are more careful about checking boxes than they are doing in-depth interviews and truly getting to know candidates.

7. Multiple data points are always more effective in identifying strengths and weaknesses of leadership candidates, no matter the position. Too often, executive recruiting firms will present their final candidates without identifying key liabilities and weaknesses. As a result, boards and others who perform the selection are surprised when there are significant weaker areas that did not appear in the executive search report.



8. Talented leaders are in short supply. As a result, it is important for organizations to develop leadership talent from within whenever possible. Leaders identify other potential leaders and make sure they are assigned challenges that will allow them to show what they can do. Challenging assignments will also provide on-the-job learning opportunities.

9. It is often better to bring in outside talent in positions below where you hope they will grow to so that you get a chance to observe them before the investment and the consequences are too great.

10. Successful leaders recognize the impact that their communications have on employees and, as a result, are careful about what they say and how they say it. They have more of what we now call emotional intelligence.

***PSP has found that leaders who develop an empathetic, supportive, and participatory style, coupled with excellent problem solving and execution skills, provide the most effective approach to achieving results. They are able to coach and manage to the objectives and results needed.***

