

## Successful Business Leaders – The Common Traits

### SCG Helps Business Leaders Navigate Their Way From Good To Great

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Stonewater Consulting Group (SCG) was recently engaged by a top tier international membership body to deliver a number of state-wide addresses on the traits of success in business leaders. The results of the research undertaken and the main points from the presentations are shared below.

For a very long time, researchers and academics have been trying to qualify and quantify the characteristics of success. The first challenge is to set the parameters of the study and in our case we defined success as the completion of a business objective as a result of steadily taking action towards it.

Our study centred on business leaders who exhibited ongoing and prolonged success. What it revealed is that they share a common set of characteristics and personality traits. This isn't an unusual concept and many of the most respected commentators on this subject - Jack Canfield, Anthony Robbins and Bob Burg included - have said much the same.

Like most experts on this topic, we believe that there are specific traits witnessed in successful people no matter what field they are in or what they do; from athletes, to business professionals. In the business world specifically, the increasing rate of change has been a major factor when looking at what determines success. Whereas in the past, managers were expected to maintain the status quo in order to move ahead, new forces in the marketplace have made it necessary to expand this focus. The new leaders of tomorrow are visionary. They are both quick learners and formidable teachers. Not only do they foresee paradigm changes in society, but they also have a strong sense of ethics and work to build integrity in their organisations.

## Leaders Turn Lessons Learnt Into Deliverable Actions



Raymond Cattell, a pioneer in the field of personality assessment, developed the Leadership Potential equation in 1954. This equation is still used today to determine the traits which characterise an effective leader and it applies to captains of industry as much as to anyone else. Cattell categorized those traits as follows:

**Emotional stability** Good leaders must be able to tolerate frustration and stress. Overall, they must be well-adjusted and have the psychological maturity to deal with anything they are required to face. They make decisions based on fact and reason and even under extreme duress their decision-making is non-emotional, non-biased and therefore (usually) the right decision.

**Dominance** Leaders are often times competitive and decisive and usually enjoy overcoming obstacles. Overall, they are assertive in their thinking style as well as their attitude in dealing with others. By their very definition, they naturally take the lead in a given situation and are able to bring people on a journey with them.

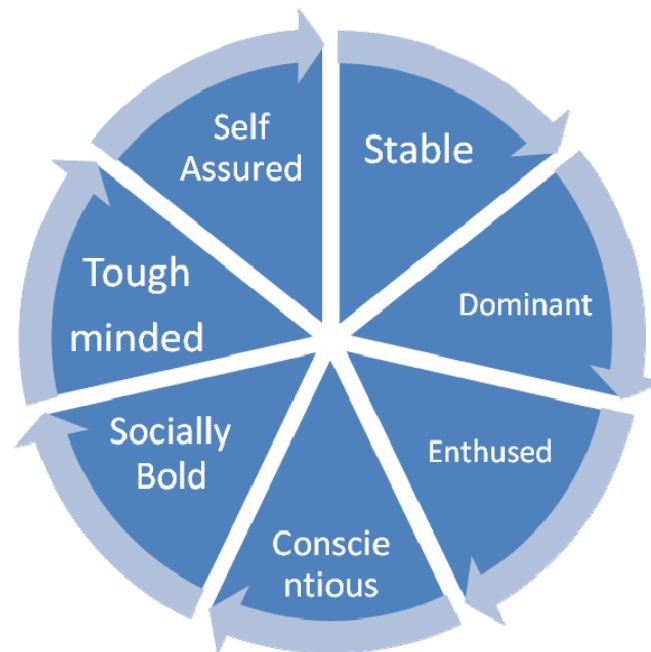
**Enthusiasm** Leaders are usually seen as active, expressive, and energetic. They are often very optimistic and open to change. Overall, they are generally quick and alert and tend to be uninhibited.

**Conscientiousness** Leaders are often dominated by a sense of duty and tend to be very exacting in character. They usually have a very high standard of excellence and an inward desire to do one's best. They also have a need for order and tend to be very self-disciplined. They show a high degree of moral regard and are grounded in ethical behaviour.

**Social boldness** Leaders tend to be spontaneous and are quick to take action. They are usually socially aggressive and generally thick-skinned. Overall, they are responsive to others and tend to be high in emotional stamina.

**Toughmindedness** Good leaders are practical, logical, and to-the-point. They tend to be low in sentimental attachments and comfortable with criticism. They are usually insensitive to hardship and overall, are very poised. When faced with a challenge they are resolute in finding a solution and they are quick to pick themselves up after a disappointment.

**Self-assurance** Self-confidence and resiliency are common traits among leaders. They tend to be free of guilt and have little or no need for approval. They are generally secure in themselves and are usually unaffected by prior mistakes or failures.



Our research indicated that the characteristics of success in business leaders doesn't stop there. Corporate executives of today must also possess traits which will help them motivate others and lead them in new directions. Leaders of the future must be able to envision the future and convince others that their vision is worth following and in this respect, their traits are far more weighted towards a high emotional intelligence (EQ). Measuring these types of skills is a fairly recent phenomenon, but the common traits include:

- **High Energy** Long hours and some travel are usually a prerequisite for leadership positions, especially as your company grows. Remaining alert and staying focused are two of the greatest obstacles you will have to face as a leader.
- **Intuitiveness** Rapid changes in the world today combined with information overload result in an inability to "know" everything. In other words, reasoning and logic will not get you through all situations. In fact, more and more leaders are learning to the value of using their intuition and trusting their "gut" when making decisions.
- **Maturity** To be a good leader, personal power and recognition must be secondary to the development of your employees. In other words, maturity is based on recognizing that more can be accomplished by empowering others than can be by ruling others.

- **Team Orientation** Business leaders today put a strong emphasis on team work. Instead of promoting an adult/child relationship with their employees, leaders create an adult/adult relationship which fosters team cohesiveness.
- **Empathy** Being able to "put yourself in the other person's shoes" is a key trait of leaders today. Without empathy, you can't build trust. And without trust, you will never be able to get the best effort from your employees.
- **Charisma** People usually perceive leaders as larger than life. Charisma plays a large part in this perception. Leaders who have charisma are able to arouse strong emotions in their employees by defining a vision which unites and captivates them. Using this vision, leaders motivate employees to reach toward a future goal by tying the goal to substantial personal rewards and values.

What is striking about the results of this research is that the common skills exhibited by successful business leaders are invariably soft skills. Furthermore, these skills are not genetically preordained. If the goal is to become an exceptional business leader then investing in personal development and persistence are the keys to your success.

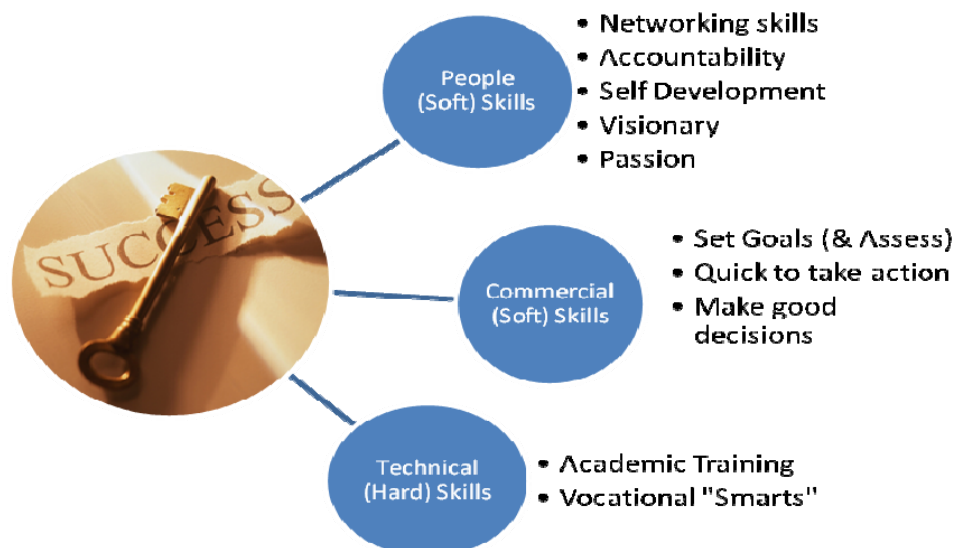
## Top 10 Characteristics Of Leaders & Successful Business Professionals:

At SCG, our own research into the top 10 characteristics of successful business leaders has resulting in the following conclusions:

A leader is multi-faceted and is able to employ different techniques to manage, communicate, inspire and produce results as the situation demands. Leaders are able to tell a great story that can inform, involve and motivate staff at the right times.

A leader picks his or her moment to drive home a point and/or to take action. They leave no doubt about the importance of an initiative and its impact on the organization.

In order to be highly successful in their chosen field, there are 2 types of skills exhibited by leaders; soft skills and hard skills. Within the "Soft Skills" category are found commercial and people skills (EQ) and this forms the lion's share of leadership skills. The hard skills (IQ) pertain to qualifications, vocational training, and intellectual horsepower.



## Conclusion

So what exactly are the traits, characteristics, and behaviours of a great business leader as opposed to a good business leader? As we have identified, there are several, but predominantly they are soft skills, Emotional Intelligence and commercial acumen.

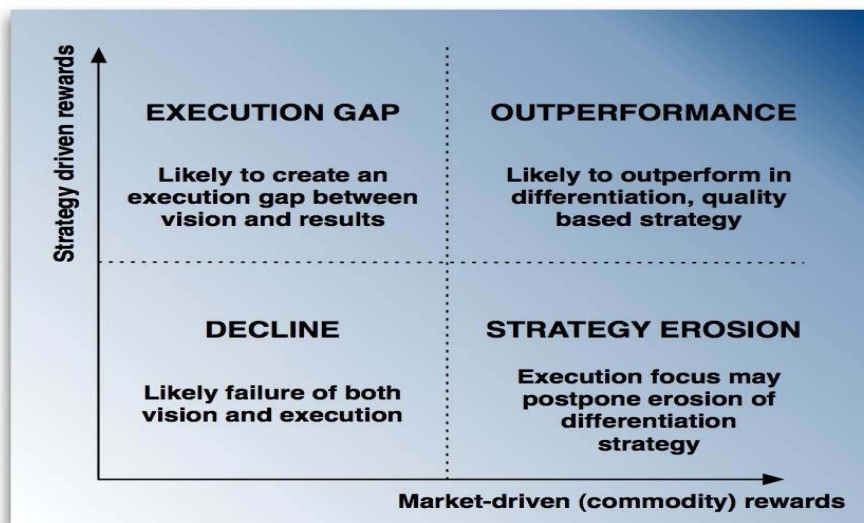
The first thing that we recognise in a great leader is the way they view the world around them. Whether it be the type of market they are in, what type of business it is, or just realizing how important the people they have around them are, they always are aware of their surroundings. They aren't going to try and make a million dollars in a bear market, or treat employees poorly. They simply will do the best they can in the environment surrounding them.

Achieving success in business also means being innovative, and trying to outwork everyone around them. To be innovative doesn't mean to re-invent the wheel, sometimes it can be taking a tried strategy, and putting a little twist on it.

Furthermore, excellent business leaders lead by example, and are always willing to do what it takes to succeed. They have the skills to know how to get people to follow them, and how to make people believe in the product or service they are selling. This means they are able to get people excited to work, to get people excited to buy a product from them, and to get people to buy into a concept.

Finally, success in business is about balancing a strategic mindset and a long-term vision, with deliverable outcomes that are realistic and achievable. That balance is about understanding your market and what your customers are ready for.

## Relationship Between Strategy Driven and Market Driven Vision



Success in business requires the combination of a number of variables all working in a state of flux. Even the definition of success is hard to pin down. By embodying many of the qualities identified above you will at the very least deliver value in the work place. As Einstein said: "try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value". If that happens, success will usually follow.