



Tips for Identifying the Next Generation of Leaders*

True leadership goes beyond skill of performance to the skill of leading performance. True leadership goes beyond execution to the higher level of strategy. True leadership goes beyond finding solutions to creating a vision that makes the problem disappear. True leadership is vision in action.

So, how do you, the current leader, identify the next generation of leaders when you're thinking about investing your organization's time, money and energy? How will you know if they are the best choice? Here are six things to look for:

1.) Prior Leadership: The best predictor of the future is the past, so find out if your potential leadership candidate has a history of leadership. Look for leadership experiences in school, with service organizations like Rotary or The Boy Scouts, in church, internships or other organizations. These choices show initiative and natural leadership qualities.

2.) Engineering the Future: Does your candidate light up when you have conversations about the future and the opportunities that are possible for your business? Does the candidate have the ability to envision the future and the ambition to make it happen? Ongoing conversations will reveal these qualities.

3.) No Lone Wolves: Leaders recognize they operate best when they enlist the help of others: they add value and appreciate the team's input. And, good leaders share

the credit with the team. A business is always bigger than one person, and an emerging leader will show this skill by being a part of something bigger than him or herself.

4.) Dissatisfaction with "We've Always Done it THIS WAY:" Emerging leaders look for new ways to do things. They don't necessarily believe that the way your organization has done things is the best way. In fact, they're quite certain it's not. Because they have technology skills on their side, they'll show you a better way to accomplish the "tried and true process." While you might be annoyed with this, it is a sign of leadership, demonstrating constructive and analytical thinking.

5.) Accountability and Responsibility: A trait of potential leaders is that they don't shrink from their responsibilities. They step up to the plate and own up both to what needs to be done and what they've done. They're accountable for failures. But, they also want responsibility because it comes with accomplishment. And, leaders crave accomplishment, contributing to the greater good and acknowledgement for their results. A leader always looks for the next challenge and the next opportunity.

6.) Mental Toughness: Sometimes a leader has to make a decision that's not popular, but is necessary. In tough times, leaders face criticism and misunderstanding that can bring about hard and lonely

times. But a leader always does what is best for the organization and the greater good. Your leadership candidates may be early on in their careers, but find out how they've handled tough situations in the past. There's no substitute for feeling the emotions and going through the decision-making process of a lay-off, for example. There's no shortcut to learning mental toughness. Experience is the best teacher.

Potential leaders also need the character and the right setting in which to grow. Once you have identified the right candidates, your organization should have a plan in place to develop your emerging leaders. See our article on Developing Leaders in Your Organization for more information.

**This article assumes that your leadership candidates have the required education and skillsets to perform their work as they prepare for leadership.*

