



Identifying Leadership Potential

by **Steven D Huff**

General Electric's Jack Welch is quoted saying, "This company cannot be managed to perpetual double-digit growth. Management implies stewardship of an asset, orderly, structured, tightly controlled. With leadership the question at the beginning and at the end of the day is, 'How far can we take this. . .how big can we grow it. . .how fast can we get there?' A manager controls things, keeps them in channels, builds and respects boundaries. The leader goes after those boundaries with a hammer, drawing the best ideas from anywhere: the factory floor, and other businesses."

Roger Mathis, chairman of Best Western International would add, "Leaders are people who make decisions, who make plans, who set objectives, who know where they are going. They give confidence to those around them. They set the tone, the feeling, and the culture of the entire organization." Looking for a better way is no longer just an option in our competitive world today. To be successful, every business will have to staff with strong leaders at every level of the organization.

Here are six traits to look for as you identify potential leaders:

- **Previous Leadership Experience** - It has been said that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. Take note of workers who speak of previous leadership experience, even positions of leadership in civic clubs, churches or other activities. If a worker showed leadership potential outside the job, she may have leadership potential on the job.
- **The Ability To Challenge Others** - Jack Welch rightly noted, "Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion." Look for people with the ability to inspire and challenge others with a great cause.
- **A Willingness To Take Responsibility** - Businessman Fred Smith aptly stated, "The person who wants the reward without the responsibility is not a leader." Look for people who get things done and make things happen. Leaders take charge and are always willing to answer for the outcome.
- **The Integrity Factor** - Good leaders do not cross the line. In fact, they stay far back from it. As Peter Scotese once said, "Integrity is not a 90 percent thing, not a 95 percent thing; either you have it or you don't." The best leaders do.
- **Respected By Others** - Someone said: "It isn't important that people like you. It is important that they respect you. They may like you but not follow you. If they respect you, they'll follow you, even if perhaps they don't like you." Good leaders are not out to win popularity contests. Instead, they earn the respect of others through hard work and by sticking to their principles.
- **The Resolve To Persevere** - No one can lead without being criticized or without facing difficult and discouraging times. Leadership requires the ability to persevere in the midst of adversity. Good leaders live by the saying, "Never despair, but if you do, WORK ON IN DESPAIR."