



Should You Hire a “Don’t Rock the Boat” Leader or “Leader Who Rocks”?

Leaders come in different formats, sizes, and designs – with their own experience, skill, and personal style. Although there is undeniable personal bias in a leadership style, there is also as much undeniable influence of context in how that specific leader behaves in a given leadership role. Throughout our consulting engagements over many years, we have met four types of leaders who are quite distinct in the way they conduct business, lead their organisations, and manage people.

The key question regarding leadership involves assessing and knowing what you should expect in the individual’s capacity and ability to lead change when required. There is no doubt that today’s leaders need to breathe change to survive and add value to whatever mandate and organisational goals they are expected to achieve. At the very least, we all need to acknowledge that today’s leaders face enormous responsibility, accountability, and pressure to perform as no leadership role is easy to conduct. Although we need to respect the efforts and ambitions of leaders who give their best to do a good job given their context, we also need to be crystal clear on

what we expect from such an individual in terms of anticipated results in a given environment.

The following four leadership definitions may help management to understand what they should expect from a leader’s performance in a given organisational context.

1) Don’t Rock the Boat Leader

This leader type has become the most popular in many companies for a number of reasons, primarily because such individuals provide acceptable stable growth and deliver results according to agreed-upon plans and budgets. However, you cannot expect this leader type to drastically drive significant transformation or innovative initiatives or exceed objectives because it is simply not designed to do so. No surprises or high expectations are requirements of the person who fulfils this type of role. Instead, acceptable and consistent results will do as long as the company’s stock value moves slowly and steadily upwards year after year. If you want steady and satisfactory revenues and profits, these are the leaders whom you want to operate and manage your business.



Think of them as treasury bonds. They deliver acceptable returns from a safe and stable operation year after year. It is a perfect leadership type, especially if you have a “cash cow” business. After all, why even think about changing the cow if it provides milk day after day?

2) Perfectionist Leader

These leaders are strategic but move slowly because they usually want, for example, to launch the perfect product or service with the perfect design and perfect market conditions. Or, they consider all the innumerable potential probabilities of impact on a transformation initiative that could change the direction of the organisation. They may have difficulties synthesising the information presented and cannot make up their minds easily. Often taking too much time to decide and implement any change initiative, they run the risk of staying behind the curve. Although they are survivors, they are becoming less and less popular due to ever-increasing competitive market conditions.

Think of them as novelists who edit and revise their draft manuscripts over and over, refusing to let them go and submit them to publishers until all words and grammatical references are perfect. By the time they are ready to send

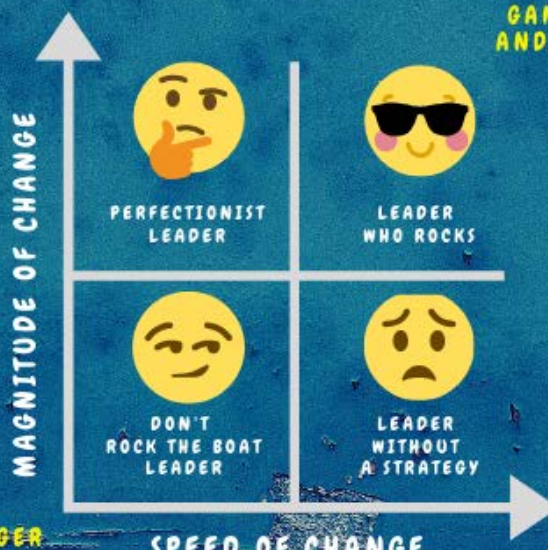
their masterpieces off into the world, the editors and/or readers are no longer interested in what they have to say.

3) Leader Without a Strategy

The main concern of this leader type is driving change regardless of the impact on the organisation, its overall strategy, its goals, and its vision. Mostly swamped with many small change projects, such leaders often feel overwhelmed with the amount of effort required to bring projects to a successful end. This leader type excels in putting out fires and responding to short-term crises, typically following the latest market trends without significant research into whether the new strategy suits the company. Desiring to look progressive and proactive, they succeed in looking busy. Yet, stakeholders may wonder what results they actually achieve in light of the expenditure of time, money, and resources.

Think of such a leader as the proverbial chicken without a head, running around, keeping busy, actively delegating tasks, but without a central focus. Things may be accomplished, but the impact on the whole

4 TYPES OF LEADERS



GAME CHANGER AND FAST GROWTH

INCREMENTAL CHANGER AND SLOW GROWTH

SPEED OF CHANGE



organisation may not be optimal or desirable.

4) Leader Who Rocks

Leaders who rock have the ability to drive major transformational change and innovative initiatives and lead others – not with their assumed authority, but because of their convincing vision and highly compelling ideas and insights about the business. They are not afraid of failure and are willing to take highly complex, yet calculated, risks. At the forefront of not only fact-based but truth-based decision making, such leaders are great listeners, as well as experts on knowing to whom they should listen. They spread wisdom and are champions of knowledge sharing. Possessing the ability and capacity to view the future so vividly, leaders who rock persuade others around them to become true believers who come to see and are willing to share the same future. Leaders who rock move fast, relentlessly, with accurate information on hand, and with super focus on the best outcome for all stakeholders. They do not differentiate among stakeholders; they are purely interested in building the best, most profitable, and sustainable businesses for the future.

Think of them as charismatic rock stars who have true talent and the ability to have an effect on their audience – who can lift their fans higher with a positive message and subtly impact their lives.

Make Sure You Select the Right Leader to Grow your Business

The bottom line is this: Acknowledging and understanding the type of leaders you hire, develop, and retain to operate and grow your business is mission critical to its future success. There is no point of putting “don’t rock the boat leaders” in roles where you expect them to significantly transform and grow your business. At the other extreme, placing a “leader who rocks” into a position where you only want consistent, acceptable, and stable growth is not an optimal use of talent either. Perfectionists and no-strategy leaders fall somewhere in between and work best only in environments that value slow growth or short-term planning.

With the appropriate, practical, and truthful optics – in terms of future growth plans and expectations – management can compose a more realistically aligned leadership team to drive stakeholder value, productivity, and



efficiency according to realistic organisation capacity and capability. In the end, all stakeholders – leaders, employees, shareholders, and the community at large – stand to benefit from forward-looking, proactive, and intelligent decisions that may significantly affect all parties.

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