



The Importance of Finding, and Deploying, the “Right” Key Leader

Traditionally, leadership referred to the ability to lead others—a definition that misses a critical point. Every person is, or should be, his or her own leader to start with. After all, to be a responsible family member, community member, citizen, employee, colleague, business manager, or executive, every individual must be a personal leader. If not, how can people claim to lead others?

This reinvented definition is urgent, vital, and the most important ingredient to achieving success or fulfillment in our personal lives, communities, societies, and organisations. Every passing day is lost to mediocrity, unhappiness, inefficiency, conflict, untapped human effort, and underperforming organisations.

Today’s complex world requires (or, rather, demands) key leaders in order to transform problems into solutions, and questions into answers. How, then, can an organisation find and nurture not only leaders, but also key leaders?

How Potential Leaders Can Become Key Leaders

To help organisations identify, develop, and retain only the right leaders to grow their business, we have designed a nine-box grid assessment tool to facilitate this process (see chart). First of all, we strongly believe that when it comes to leadership assessment, the focus should be on positive, not failed, leadership. So, if an individual makes it to square one on the leadership grid, others should already consider that person to be a good leader—perhaps not a complete one, but at least an adequate one. If organisations go through the hassle of placing their leaders in boxes to assess them, they should be accountable for developing them, as well supporting them as they strive to reach their maximal potential. To genuinely build outperforming organisations, the focus should be on hiring, developing, and retaining “only” the right leaders to maximise returns.

AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF

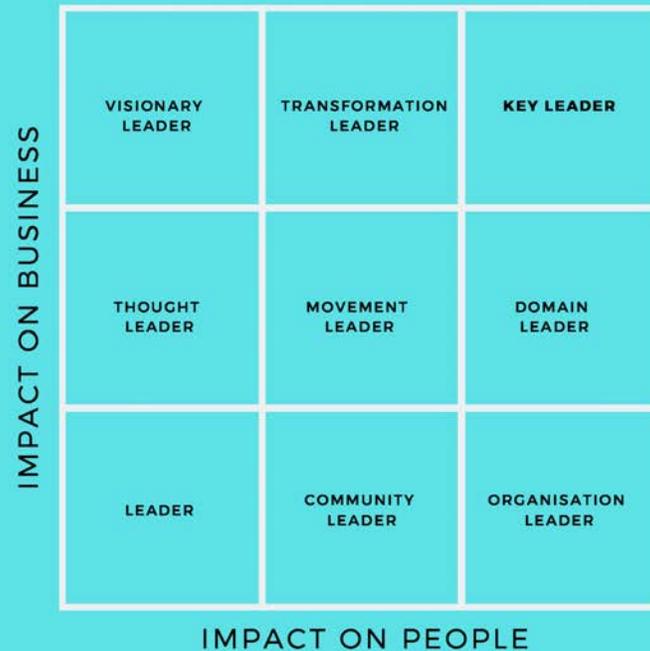
LEADERSHIP DEFINITION

FOR BEGINNERS

WE NEED TO FOCUS ON POSITIVE LEADERSHIP, NOT FAILED LEADERSHIP. SO, IF SOMEONE MAKES IT TO THE GRID AS A LEADER, WE NEED TO CONSIDER THAT THE PERSON IS ALREADY A GOOD LEADER. THERE IS NO POINT IN PLACING LEADERS INTO NEGATIVE BOXES AND LEAVING THEM THERE TO THEIR OWN DEVICES. IF WE GO THROUGH THE HASSLE OF PLACING LEADERS IN BOXES, WE SHOULD BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR DEVELOPING THEM. IF WE GENUINELY WANT TO BUILD OUTPERFORMING ORGANISATIONS, WE SHOULD FOCUS ON HIRING, DEVELOPING, AND RETAINING *ONLY* THE RIGHT LEADERS TO MAXIMISE RETURNS.

THE LEADER WHO ASPIRES TO THE TOP RIGHT-HAND CORNER BECOMES A KEY LEADER.

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR POTENTIAL LEADERS?



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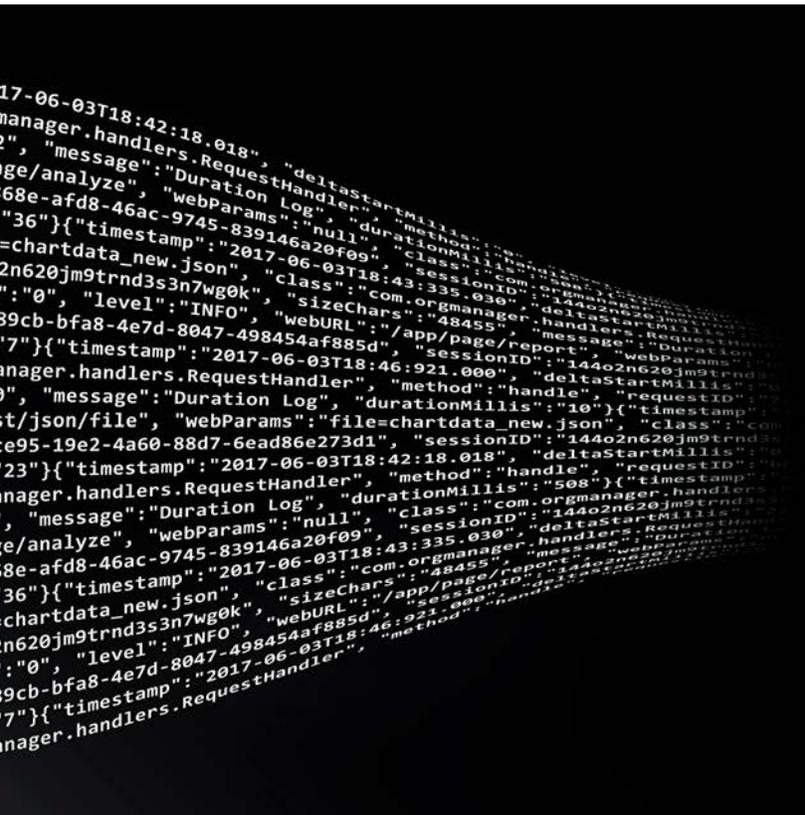
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”Acknowledging and understanding the type of leaders you hire, develop, and retain to operate and grow your business, as well as handle transformation, is mission critical to its future success.”



The leader who aspires to the top right-hand corner of the grid becomes a key leader after mastering the other types of leadership. That said, we also need to underline the fact that not everyone wishes to become a key leader, which is fine, as long as these individuals have responsibilities to match their aptitude, for example:

- **Individual leader** is someone, first and foremost, who can lead himself or herself in all aspects of life—family, career, and so forth.
- **Community leader** has the ability to lead a community—for example, a specific function, subject area, or, perhaps, an association of like-minded people—with recognised expertise, knowledge, behavioural competencies, and followers.
- **Organisation leader** is a person who possesses the capacity to operate as a community leader, but does so for a complex and sophisticated organisation, within which are interdependent units that can only succeed if they interact smoothly.
- **Thought leader** has the ability to initiate innovative and practical thinking to further the success of the business.
- **Movement leader** can have a significant and positive impact on both the business and the people in the organisation by moving them, in alignment, toward mutually satisfying goals.
- **Domain leader** is a person who earns respect and possesses authority and knowledge of the company's specific industry domain or area of business.
- **Visionary leader** has the talent to imagine the organisation's long-term potential, seeing beyond the present scenario to the far-off future. With such a vision, that leader can inspire the organisation, as well as all its stakeholders, to cooperate toward reaching the same goals.
- **Transformation leader** uses a broad imagination to act on a concept and transform the organisation in ways that ultimately reflect that vision and make it happen.
- **Key leader** embodies all of the above abilities and possesses the multiple talent and skills that can significantly transform, not only the organisation, but also the workforce in positive and inspiring ways.



Within the grid, different paths lead a person toward achieving a key leadership role. For example, an individual can transition from being a thought leader to a visionary leader, or from being a community leader to an organisational leader, and then upward to a key leader. Another path might involve the individual transitioning from the role of organisational leader to domain leader, or perhaps visionary leader to a transformational leader—and then, again, to a key leadership position. In the best of all worlds, any qualified leader can grow and develop from being a generic leader to a movement leader to a key leader—having a significant and positive impact on both the business and the people in the organisation by inspiring them to align their activities toward goals that meet the needs of all stakeholders.

When It Comes to Change, Key Leaders Distinguish Themselves

An important question regarding leadership involves assessing and knowing what to 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. In today's

highly competitive markets, leaders face enormous responsibility, accountability, and pressure to perform.

Some leaders provide acceptable stable growth and deliver results according to agreed-upon plans and budgets. But this individual will not drastically drive significant transformation or innovative initiatives or exceed objectives. Instead, this leader achieves steady and satisfactory revenues and profits.

Others are strategic, but move slowly because they usually want to launch the perfect product/service with the perfect design and market conditions. Or, they consider the innumerable potential probabilities of impact on a transformation initiative that could change the direction of the company. They may find it difficult to synthesise information, taking too much time to decide and implement any change initiative, thereby falling behind the curve.

Some leaders drive change regardless of the impact on the organisation, its overall strategy, its goals, and its vision. Usually swamped with small change projects, they feel overwhelmed by the effort required to bring projects to a successful end. This leader type excels in putting out fires, responding to short-term crises, and appearing busy.



But a key leader can drive major transformational change and innovative initiatives, while leading others. They achieve these results, not with an assumed authority, but due to their convincing vision and highly compelling ideas and insights about the business. They do not fear failure and are willing to take highly complex, yet calculated, risks. They are also great listeners and champions of knowledge sharing—purely interested in building the best, most profitable, and sustainable businesses for the future.

Select the Right Leaders 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, as well as handle transformation, is mission critical to its future success. 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. In the end, all stakeholders—leaders, employees, shareholders, and the community at large—stand to benefit from forward-looking, proactive, and intelligent decisions by key leaders that may significantly affect all parties.

About the Author:

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