



WHAT I WANT IN A LEADER

Mary McGeoch wants flexibility and inspiration.

I have worked with many types of leaders of varying ages and at different levels in diverse organisations. I have undertaken the role of a leader myself and I certainly understand firsthand the challenges that come with the job. I have also been most fortunate to be in the position of reporting to leaders whom I greatly admire and whose leadership style I truly appreciated.

My own background is predominately within the fields of human resources and psychology within the organisational setting and I also specialise in recruitment and have managed the recruitment process for numerous key leadership positions. Thanks to this experience I have seen directly the damaging consequences of placing an ineffective leader into such a significant role.

Leaders are said to drive the direction of the organisation and the managers steer the workforce in the predetermined direction accordingly. A colleague of mine once remarked that managers lead employees through the path in a forest and it is the leader's role to inform the group that they are in the wrong forest.

I believe leaders need to have the most advanced level of core behavioural capabilities such as being enterprising, displaying the most sophisticated level of vision, inspiring their organisation, demonstrating organisational ownership and having the ability to interact with other individuals at a leadership level. I would suggest that certainly not

everybody is naturally capable of this and that some individuals are naturally born to be leaders. I absolutely feel that this is true of some of the individuals for whom I have worked.

In my experience, those leaders who are less effective have tended to manage their role in a way which is separate from the people they are charged with leading. As a result, their impact on the organisation, and hence their true leadership, is limited.

I believe that the role of the leader in an organisation is also highly dependent upon the climate of the job market. I also think that this means the role, and as a result the individual within the role, requires flexibility. Leaders are expected to confidently guide their organisation through

uncertain times and to retain and invigorate their workforce through times of skill shortages. Moreover, the busy nature of their role can add a further challenge by preventing them from having that personal touch with their staff. I agree with Kate Sweetman's conclusion in the blog *What's Different About Leadership in 2011?* that this means that the skills of leaders will need to increase over the next few years.

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