

# LEADERS BORN OR MADE

## AND THE MISSING PART

Personal attributes might help you become a good leader, market and company insight are important, the development of your skill sets essential, but there is one aspect we haven't considered enough in this ongoing search for the truth about nature and nurture.

In a world of growing complexities and dynamics, rapid change has become the single most constant force – with a growing number of opportunities and challenges. This change also impacts the understanding of leader- and followership.



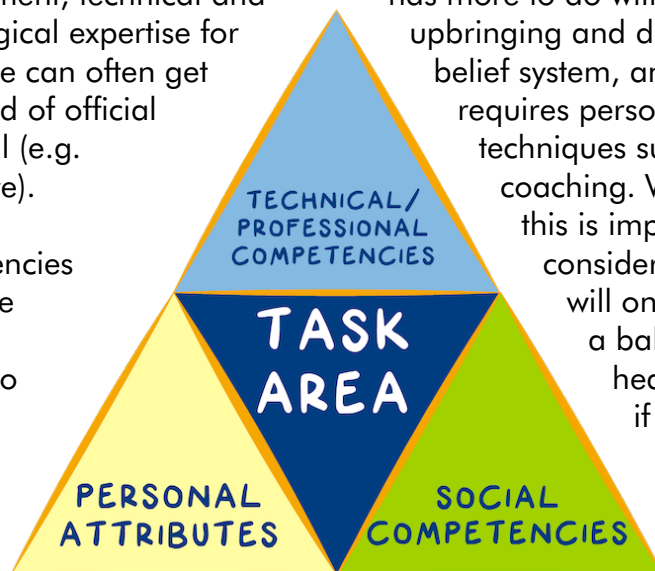
professionals. Every job has certain task areas and the one leaders share is their responsibility for people.

Each task area comes with 3 very different sets of ability: professional competencies, social competencies and personal attributes.

Professional competencies cover insight and understanding of the organisation as well as knowledge of products/services. This could also include many functional skills like project management, technical and technological expertise for which one can often get some kind of official approval (e.g. certificate). Social competencies are those mainly related to

self-awareness, self-confidence, discipline and resilience.

That's why leaders have to develop and grow. Most of the hard personal attributes we are born with are difficult or nearly impossible to change (e.g. height, stuttering). However, competencies can be developed (mostly through "on the job" experience, feedback or formal training) and soft personal attributes can be improved. I refer to this as growing, rather than developing, because it takes much more time and energy. It has more to do with a person's upbringing and deep-rooted belief system, and often requires personalised techniques such as coaching. We believe this is important to consider because you will only achieve a balanced and healthy outcome if you develop and grow a person.



### Three Essential Aspects for All Leaders

I guess we all agree that a leader needs a variety of skills and attributes to be effective.

The logic I use below applies not only to leaders but to all

interpersonal exchanges. This refers to communication, negotiation, networking and social leadership skills.

Personal attributes are, in many ways, hard-wired characteristics we are born with but also include softer elements such as

In a perfect world all four triangles would be the same size. So the requirements to manage a task area would be evenly matched by the number and level of competencies and attributes.

## Is there One Universal Characteristic?

It is usually mentioned as the number one characteristic of successful leaders and therefore worth mentioning at this point.

**Authenticity** is originally a technical term used in psychology, existentialist philosophy and aesthetics. It is the degree to which you are true to your own purpose and true self, despite external pressures. The inner self manifests itself through behaviours and your actions should be aligned with your values and beliefs. Research shows that most top leaders and managers earn full marks for their intellectual ability, but low marks for dealing with people. Leaders cannot achieve maximum effectiveness unless they develop winning relationships with those they lead. Often, this involves moving from an "I" form of leadership based on personal forcefulness, to a "we" form of leadership based on collaboration. Both forms are acceptable; the challenge is to achieve a healthy balance in the journey from personal power to relational power.

DO NOT ASSUME  
THAT YOU KNOW  
WHAT YOUR  
EMPLOYEES OR  
COLLEAGUES ARE  
THINKING OR THAT  
YOU HAVE REACHED  
THEM; TO KNOW  
FOR SURE, ASK.

This interpersonal effectiveness demands total authenticity, the "life force of relationships".

- **listen authentically** by being present when others talk to them
- **influence authentically** by dealing only in straight talk
- **appreciate authentically** by being sincere and kind
- **serve authentically** to exercise the core of real leadership
- **share stories authentically** to inspire others.

### Watch Out For Influencing Beliefs

In its 2012 study 'Are Leaders Born or Made? Perspectives from the Executive Suite', the Center for Creative Leadership addressed the nature vs. nurture dilemma head on by asking over 300 C-level executives for their views on this. Just over half of respondents (52 per cent) believed leaders were made, almost a third (29 per cent) believed they were equally born and made, and nearly one out of five (19 per cent) that they were born.

When asked to rank leadership elements (traits, experiences and training) in order of importance, it was no surprise that those who believed leaders were made placed experiences and training ahead of traits. Those who believed leaders were born, in contrast, ranked traits

and experiences as fairly equal, followed by training.

In most organisations, the executive level sets the tone and strongly influences the viewpoints of other people in the company. Let's call that the culture. This in turn has a huge impact on how people are selected and developed. Someone believing in born leaders would more likely put the emphasis on selecting the 'right' people and developing them, whereas a belief in leaders being made would lead to offering a broader range of leadership development opportunities to all staff.

### The Missing Aspect

In general over 80% of businesses in the Western world operate on 4 levels of culture. Many organisations are hybrids in different areas and others are transitioning from one level to the other, due to internal or external forces requiring them to adapt and change. The 4 types of business culture should be rather obvious to most of you:



**Power Driven  
Speed Boat**

Usually growing rapidly, catering for individual needs as long as they deliver and usually operating in markets with growing potential.



**Order Driven  
Authoritative Structure**

Often larger organisations. Clear hierarchies, role descriptions and step-by-step completion of work. Process and compliance are essential



**Performance Driven  
Strategic Enterprise**

Goal oriented companies with a clearly defined orientation (e.g. customers) and goals. Often showing status symbols and engaging in prestigious events.



**People Driven  
Dynamic Network**

See themselves as part of the ecosystem and responsible for the well-being of their employees: even willing to accept financial loss under certain circumstances

**S**ome essential business aspects, like strategy development, office set-up, communication and leadership style, will vary across businesses. As a logical consequence each organisation needs a different kind of leader. For example, a power-driven start-up entrepreneur may be a very effective leader in his/her

environment but may struggle in an order-driven organisation such as most corporations. What personality is to an individual, culture is to a group. If a leader is expected to be true to him/herself, it is difficult to imagine a single person operating authentically in different environments. This is

not about situational leadership but more like switching between boxing, chess, rowing and basketball. Furthermore, you don't need to be good at everything. Everyone has his/her place in the world so you would do well to identify your cultural fit and note that it might change over time.

... PERSONALITY IS TO AN INDIVIDUAL.



**Power Driven  
Modern Conqueror**

Leaders who are driven by intuition power, independence: sometimes at whatever cost. They often have a strong market insight.



**Order Driven  
Organiser**

Leaders whose status is clearly defined by their role and position. The individual roles & responsibilities clarify who is responsible for what.



**Performance Driven  
Goal Getter**

Leaders who are ambitious and like to compete. They like to set goals and targets. Mgmt. by objectives is the preference and they delegate responsibility and measure accountability



**People Driven  
Performance Socialiser**

Leaders who easily hand over their lead if it helps performance. They share responsibilities, are keen on coaching and enabling their colleagues.

## Good Leadership? Be Ready For Change!

**A**n acceleration in pace means it may be difficult to continue relying on previous experiences, facts and figures. Unless you can adapt to the times, you will get left behind. Effective leaders must be comfortable with change; they must practise and teach agility and resilience. Bringing about positive change is never easy. It requires not only abandoning some of the old habits and patterns, but also relentlessly trying new approaches.

I predict that, in the coming two decades, the focus of leadership will move away from the leader towards the followers. This means that, in the future, the most successful leaders will be those who are able to maximise their people's potential by listening, asking, challenging, supporting and guiding. That is also why coaching will become a mandatory leadership technique in every leader's portfolio.

Social technologies will start creating a never-seen-before transparency which will have a fundamental impact

on companies and on your leadership - being 'virtually' in the open and exposed. Given the speed of word of mouth, acting purposefully, ethically and behaving authentically will be vital to one's performance and success. More dynamic staffing systems will support this and more agile workforces will mean people will follow leaders they choose to follow. In years to come your leadership qualities will also be rated in real-time. So get ready now!

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Rhys Photis is best known as a passionate advocate of people-driven business growth that is future proof. He is an entrepreneur and acclaimed leadership trainer; co-founded [GPi](#) and developed the [Pathfinder](#) method to enable business leaders to unlock their business potential in this way.

Coming from a dynamic entrepreneurial background he understood early on the ups and downs of successful family businesses. Then went on to lead international internet-based projects that rolled out across over 50 countries which inspired him to do an MBA International.

