

How A+ Leaders Leverage their Top Four Strengths

Richard Earle, Ph.D.

McKinsey Quarterly's [Jan 2015] analysis of 20 key leadership traits now pinpoints the top four which predict 89% of the variance between strong and weak organizations.

While most visible amongst executives, I believe McKinsey's leadership findings point the way to developing high-ROI corporate capacity more broadly ... be it at the reception desk, on the shop floor or in the C-suite. I'll post about this in the near future.

McKinsey targets these as the highest contributing traits of effective leaders:

- ✓ Strong results orientation
- ✓ Reliance on different viewpoints on a problem
- ✓ Understanding and supporting co-workers in their work challenges *and*
- ✓ Implementing and managing solutions to ensure their planned results

Leading the charge in today's climate of mission-critical corporate change can be a career crowning or a prematurely graying experience. My 20 years' coaching senior executives highlights this as an ever more frequent challenge. More importantly, Vital Corporation's self-profiling data from >28,400 executive clients highlights which of their personal traits can become either stumbling blocks or stepping stones in their leading at full A+ potential.

Underlying these predictive traits we've discovered one theme which sets A+ leaders apart from those "performing at potential". And I suspect this theme underlies all four of McKinsey's top leadership traits.

Hallmark trait that sets A+ leaders apart



Leaders need ...

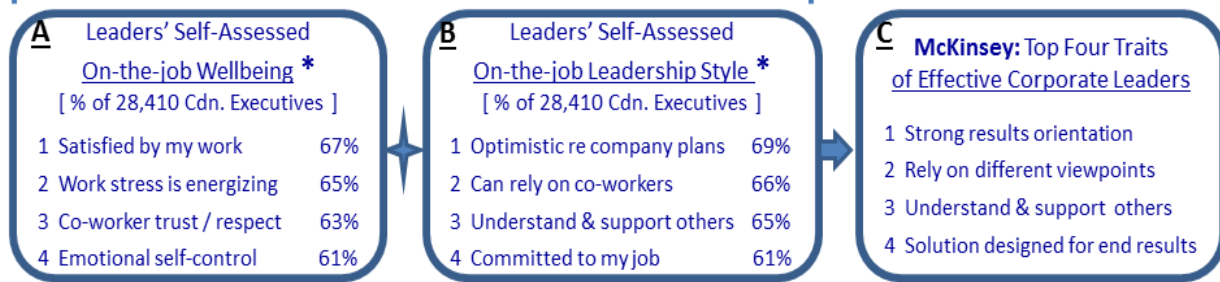
To ensure that ambitious, often disruptive changes take root, A+ leaders separate themselves from the pack by ***their ability to attract and consistently engage results-focused followers***. Whatever the size of their ego's or of their past achievements, A+ leaders accept and rely on one fact: "*Change is as change does ... and the people do the doing*".

Virtually every executive knows .. intellectually .. that Leaders need followers. However, for 34% of our executive study group, two sets of factors seem to make putting this insight into action difficult for them. They may know it, but they do it inconsistently .. often waking up at 4:30 A.M. .. still second guessing themselves about "How can I make these changes actually work?".

Evidence-based leadership development

When coaching individual executives or designing a boot camp workshop for high-potential leaders, evidence-based insights set our Vital Corporation foundation. Findings from our profiling data base [N = 28,410 Canadian executives] highlight two factors strongly predicting which executives will report top quartile vs. bottom quartile success as evaluated by their peers and their company.

Stumbling blocks OR stepping stones in achieving A+ leadership



* Source: Vital Corporation's online **VitalityPro™** profile [2008-2015]

Boxes "A" and "B" above are snapshot summaries of these two key factors and of the percentages of executives who report them as stepping stones energizing their day-to-day performance. Box B traits .. on-the-job leadership style .. clearly impact McKinsey's effectiveness markers. These "B" traits hallmark how this 65% group of A+ executives relate to and are likely seen by those they lead ... as "someone I want to follow".

The Box A traits .. more importantly .. signal how deeply personal being an A+ leader really is. These four traits summarize what we call their "personal ROI in working life". Not surprisingly, what they feel "*I'm getting back from what I'm putting in at work*" flows directly through to outcomes in Boxes "B" and "C". When personal ROI is a stumbling block, leadership potential has been unnecessarily capped. Following a low personal ROI leader is not attractive to staff.

Getting to the root of this follower challenge with these 34% of executives is typically straightforward: (1) leveraging their profile's strengths plus (2) reframing stumbling blocks as opportunities to develop proven insights and skills for building win-win reliance with their staff.

Leadership development depends on valid frontend diagnostics which (a) clarify an evidence-based personalized roadmap and then (b) deeply motivate and enable each participant to enjoy A+ leadership.

Richard Earle, Ph.D.

Canadian Institute of Stress
Vital Corporation Inc.

earle@stresscanada.org

rearle@vitalcorporation.com