

# Identifying leadership potential - the holy grail.....



Many organizations – as part of talent management/ succession-planning – need to identify leadership potential as the first step to developing these leaders and growing their potential.

We've set out below the results of 3 sets of research into "Identifying leadership potential"; you may want to incorporate some or all of these ideas into your leadership framework/ competencies/ 360 profiling.

## Development Dimensions International

DDI has developed a set of criteria that they say will accurately predict executive success, based on their own experience and research, and research by others, including work by Jim Collins for his book "Good to Great"; Morgan W. McCall, Jr.'s "High Flyers"; and Ann Howard and Doug Bray's landmark 30-year study of professional and personal development at AT&T.



DDI's list of 10 criteria to accurately predict executive success:

1. Propensity to lead. They step up to leadership opportunities.
2. They bring out the best in others
3. Authenticity. They have integrity, admit mistakes, and don't let their egos get in their way
4. Receptivity to feedback. They seek out and welcome feedback
5. Learning agility. See Lominger research
6. Adaptability. Adaptability reflects a person's skill at juggling competing demands and adjusting to new situations and people. A key here is maintaining an unswerving, "can do" attitude in the face of change.
7. Navigates ambiguity. This trait enables people to simplify complex issues and make decisions without having all the facts. 8. Conceptual thinking. Like great chess players and baseball managers, the best leaders always have the big picture in mind. Their ability to think two, three, or more moves ahead is what separates them from competitors.
9. Cultural fit
10. Passion for results

## Lominger, Inc.

Lominger and Eichenger did a study that linked "learning agility" as a predictor of leadership success.

The four types of learning agility are:

1. People Agility: Describes people who know themselves well, learn from experience, treat others constructively, and are cool and resilient under the pressures of change.
2. Results Agility: Describes people who get results under tough conditions, inspire others to perform beyond normal, and exhibit the sort of presence that builds confidence in others.
3. Mental Agility: Describes people who think through problems from a fresh point of view and are comfortable with complexity, ambiguity, and explaining their thinking to others.
4. Change Agility: Describes people who are curious, have a passion for ideas, like to experiment with test cases, and engage in skill-building activities.





Each of these factors was significantly associated with consideration as a high potential, having good-to-high performance, and staying out of trouble. People high in learning agility and likely high potentials:

1. Seek and have more experiences to learn from;
2. Enjoy complex first-time problems and challenges associated with new experiences;
3. Get more out of these experiences because they have an interest in making sense of them; and
4. Perform better because they incorporate new skills into their repertoire.

The face they show to the outside world is:

1. Eager to learn about self, others, and ideas.
2. Showing genuine willingness to learn from feedback and experience and change their behavior and viewpoints as a result.
3. Interested in helping people think and experiment.
4. Resilient and philosophical about what happens to people who push change.
5. Uncompromising: While wide-open to diversity, multiple sources, and a range of views, once they incorporate these into their thinking, they are described as stalwart in pushing their notions. They rely on logic, well-thought-through ideas, cool communications, and perseverance to sell their points.

### Ram Charin

Ram Charan lists in his book "Know How", eleven criteria for spotting future leaders in your organization. He suggests that you repeatedly practice making judgments of other people and reflect on why you might have missed in some cases. Did the individual have the potential you saw in them? How good are your judgments compared to others judgments on the same individual?

1. They consistently deliver ambitious results.
2. They continuously demonstrate growth, adaptability, and learning better and faster than their excellently performing peers.
3. They seize the opportunity for challenging, bigger assignments, thereby expanding capability and capacity and improving judgment.
4. They have the ability to think through the business and take leaps of imagination to grow the business.
5. They are driven to take things to the next level.
6. Their powers of observation are very acute, forming judgments of people by focusing on their decisions, behaviors, and actions, rather than relying on initial reactions and gut instincts; they can mentally detect and construct the "DNA" of a person.
7. They come to the point succinctly, are clear thinkers, and have the courage to state a point-of-view even though listeners may react adversely.
8. They ask incisive questions that open minds and incite the imagination.
9. They perceptively judge their own direct reports, have the courage to give them honest feedback so the direct reports grow; they dig into cause and effect if a direct report is failing.
10. They know the non-negotiable criteria of the job of their direct reports and match the job with the person; if there is a mismatch they deal with it promptly.
11. They are able to spot talent and see the "God's gift" of other individuals.

