

Authentic Leadership: The Greatest Ask

Leading with authenticity, with truth, is more about EQ than IQ, argues Mark Oliver

In the final analysis of corporate success, the quality of a firm's leaders is often the differentiating factor between winning corporations and others. Definitions of leadership might change – decentralised, team-oriented, charismatic, individually driven, inspirational – but the core attributes that define a good leader remain the same: empathy, self-belief, living by example, clarity of thinking, and most of all, authenticity. Whilst that is an ask identifying and developing individuals, who are also authenticis equally crucial and perhaps harder. Leading with authenticity, with truth, demands a higher level of EQ than IQ. Simply put, people with high IQ but low EQ cannot be authentic leaders. There is an

T rue leadership comes from higher-order motivators of courage, compassion, wisdom and meaning. In contrast, managers focus on lower-order drivers like power, pleasure and quite simply, on survival.

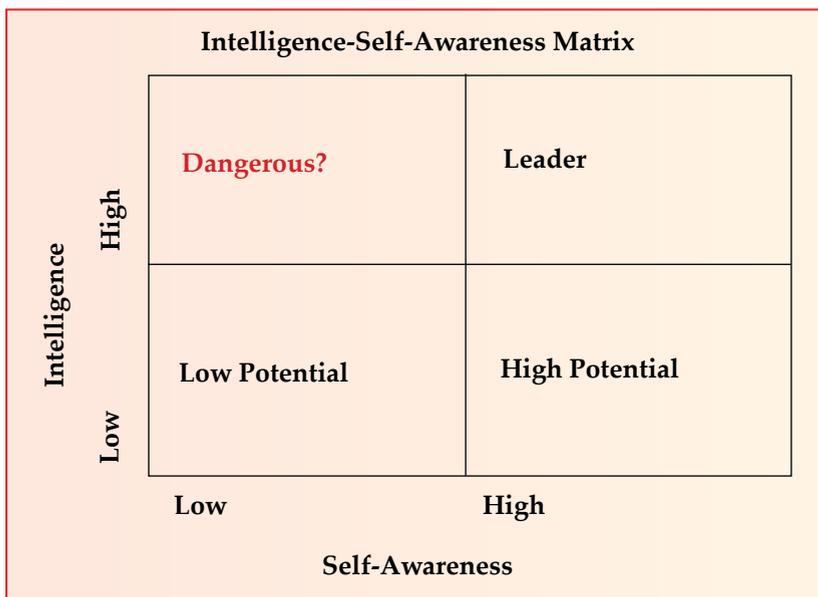


additional level – a Spiritual Quotient – that distinguishes the true leader from all others. This paper will deal with the core philosophies of leadership, underscoring the belief that true leadership comes from higher-order motivators, including meaning, wisdom, courage and compassion. Counter-intuitive to popular thinking, EQ can be developed, through both technique and exposure. In the organisational context, challenge to this effort can come from internal mindsets if higher IQ has been associated with success. The most important step in this journey, however, is to gain self-awareness.

Select leaders based on self-awareness, not just intelligence

A leader can only lead others to the extent that he can lead himself. This, in turn, is a function of how 'self-aware' the person is. Behaviours are manifestations of intentions, and when the two are in sync, a leader might be authentic, more mindful of their inner voice. Levels of self-awareness, however, can be raised over time through a clear understanding, both, of one's strengths, and especially, of areas that need work. Crucially, while humility can be a key enabler in this regard, arrogance is the biggest obstacle and self-drive the only accelerator. Self-awareness then is the prerequisite to hire leaders or promote people to senior positions.

Research indicates that only those with both the qualities of



intelligence and self-awareness qualify as 'authentic leaders'. People with high self-awareness but low intelligence are 'HIPOs', basis the hypotheses of intelligence being possible to train upwards for. Clearly, those with low levels of both attributes are 'low potential'. The riskiest combination of all, however, is low self-awareness mixed with high intelligence. Most such people are high performers, but they are also potentially the most 'dangerous' in the long run, because of their ability to manipulate situations or indeed because of their inability to sense their own weaknesses and correct for them. Often, they are people, who blame others for everything and will, if tested, potentially be psychopathic. Roughly one out of every hundred individuals are a psychopath, many of whom would, for example, commit financial-market fraud. (That said, certain fields, including the armed forces and the police, do tend to have more such people.) For these reasons, it can be very useful to use personality assessment tests that identify traits – a characteristic pattern of behaviour that is relatively stable over time – to assess the authenticity of people's intentions and behaviour.

'Intent' is the true hallmark of leadership styles as indeed, of authenticity. Decisions on hiring and promotions must be based on the capacity to assess the authenticity of their intentions and behaviour using 'trait' tools.



Great leaders are essentially focused on 'others' and not on self

A home truth that must underlie all leadership development plans is the fact that motivation precedes capability, and often drives it. The higher a person's level of motivation, the more impactful is their drive, and always, the greater

their focus on others – a quality generally known as selflessness. The basis of authentic leadership is altruistic, in its truest sense. The Universal Hierarchy of Motivation (UHM) model reveals that what drives all human beings – regardless of their culture, ethnicity, gender, nationality, history or environment – are seven fundamental motivators, moving from the base motivations of survival and pleasure all the way up to the levels of courage, wisdom and meaning, all of which focus on the 'other' as opposed to on the 'self'. Some individuals can stay within the first three levels their whole lives, while others graduate up the hierarchy, becoming true leaders.

The UHM model correlates with the three stages of brain development: baby (focused on survival), adolescence (concentrating on pleasure and power), and adult (ideally focused on compassion, courage, wisdom, meaning). Leadership comes mainly out of 'adult' motivations, and the UHM makes a very clear distinction between that and management. Specifically, leadership styles that correlate to Levels 1 to 3 are best described as 'management', which

Broader Perspective: Q&A

On the evolution of IQ and EQ:

IQ assessments began during the Second World War, when they were used to determine who should be sent out to the battlefield. Average IQ has been going up by 30 points every 100 years, meaning that a person with an average IQ today would have been a 'genius' 50 years ago. Average EQ, however, has been on the decline, with traits such as narcissism, arrogance and big egos on the rise. Becoming self-aware is a necessary first step to improving EQ.

On the importance of empathy and sympathy:

Sympathy, a well-understood trait, is about compassion (Level 4 on the UHM) while empathy is about courage (Level 5). Empathy, though, does not come naturally to people, and needs to be developed over time.

On politics and leadership:

Politics is more about power and management, and focused mostly on the self. However, some good politicians operate at higher levels, and make for great statesmen. Eventu-

ally, the self-serving motivation of politicians disconnects them from large sections of the people, leading to outcomes such as Brexit.

On emphasising positive aspects to drive change in people:

To drive change in people, managers should honestly recognise the strengths of their direct reports. This goes a long way towards motivating people and developing lasting relations, which can be leveraged to delve deeper into areas that need improvement.

The Universal Hierarchy of Motivation (UHM)		
UHM Level	UHM Drive	Focus
7	Meaning	Focus on Others
6	Wisdom	
5	Courage	
4	Compassion	
3	Power	Focus on Self
2	Pleasure	
1	Survival	

Principle'. Thus, many firms end up promoting those who are essentially technical people into supervisory or leadership roles - to which they may be poorly suited - only to only see them fail. The focus on core motivators of performance is a key missing link. The impact on the bottom-line can be devastating, particularly if these leaders (who are essentially competent managers at most), oversee high performers in turn: research indicates that managing high performers poorly can reduce the potential ROI from these individuals by at least 22 per cent. This becomes even more relevant in today's times of constant ambiguity, where needed skill sets can often be different from those that have brought companies success thus far.

As is known, intelligence itself is of different types - IQ, EQ, Practical and Spiritual - which each individual exhibit in varied levels of intensity. The capability of a subordinate determines the extent of learning and development input expected from a leader or a coach and corporate ability to map these to create powerful teams is key. Clearly, skills can be upgraded by 'training', whilst highly capable subordinates are best developed through 'coaching'. This differentiation is crucial, as is the easier recognition of individual strengths - technically sharp or those with higher relationship orientation are usually two ends of a spectrum, and our temptation to 'get both' can be misplaced in absence of the linkage to intrinsic motivation at one level and core capabilities at the other. ■

is largely about getting things done. Leadership in contrast, is really about the outwardly-focused Levels 4-7. (Confirming this, a Gallup survey found that, across boundaries of nationality, religion, ethnicity and culture, people expect their leaders to demonstrate the same four qualities: 'show me you care (compassion)', 'protect me (courage)', 'tell me the truth (wisdom)', and 'give me hope (meaning).') Monetary rewards, in this framework, only go so far, since they only address the element of 'pleasure', which quickly fades away. On the other hand, intrinsic motivators such as recognition or having meaningful work help people rise the UHM scale, and stay there. Sending people out to do charity work, for example, can also be an important motivator.

Only 15 per cent of high performers are high potentials

In identifying 'HIPOs', most organisations select the wrong criteria, such as strong performance

The high performers of today are not necessarily the leaders of tomorrow. High-potential and high-performer combinations must be very carefully planned to ensure the sustainability of leadership pipelines.



in a current role, or high ratings in leadership competencies. These criteria often confuse performance with potential, and only recognise employees, who are presently successful - the so-called 'Peter

The contents of this paper are based on discussions of The India CHRO Forum in Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore with Mark Oliver, Leadership Coach, Advisor, and Founder of MarkTwo Consulting in February 2017