

## The Traits Needed to Move Up the Leadership Ladder

Following in our series of articles on leadership and leadership development, this month I'll be discussing an issue that we often focus on when working with people in organizations - what can a person do to move up in the company? That is, what exactly does a person need to do in order to be promoted? Based on extensive leadership research (e.g., Charan, Drotter and Noel, 2001), there are up to six levels of leadership in most corporations. And each of these levels requires a distinct set of capabilities, or competencies, to succeed.

In working with many leaders throughout the world, E·A·S·I·Consult® has conducted research over the years and identified the three most distinct levels of leadership across organizations.

Here is each level and what it looks like in detail:

1. **Initially Leading Others.** Although this is the lowest-level of leadership within a company, it can be very difficult to master. In most cases, employees have contributed by doing assigned work in a successful manner before being promoted to a position at this level. Their efforts have been oriented around applying technically oriented skills, planning work and completing objectives in an accurate, complete and timely manner. Overall, the focus has only been on their own work, without regard for others' performance or accomplishments.

Once employees are promoted to supervise or manage (as a first-level leader), things change significantly. Now these new managers need to accomplish work through others. And key behavioral changes are required for talented individual contributors to become successful first-level leaders. Specifically, capabilities such as planning and assigning work to others; motivating, coaching and evaluating the performance of other employees (direct reports); and playing a key role in identifying and hiring new employees are essential.

Often the most difficult transition for new managers or leaders is the need to shift their priorities. Specifically, they must learn to value "succeeding through others" and obtain meaning and satisfaction through the members of their team. With the dramatic shift required at this level of leadership, it is essential that organizations invest in determining if high-performing individual contributors desire to become leaders of others and if they possess the necessary capabilities. Based on varied experiences and data, E·A·S·I·Consult recognizes the capabilities at this level to be:

- Delegating work and responsibilities to others - and then empowering them to succeed;
  - Continuously coaching and motivating each employee (direct report); and
  - Focusing on the larger mission and goals of the organization while enhancing their strategic capabilities to succeed as first-line leaders.
2. **Leading a Function in the Organization.** In most organizations, once leaders become directors, or even vice presidents, they become responsible for an entire function, department or region. The transition to this level of leadership poses another set of challenges for leaders, and these positions are often the first that would be classified as “mission-critical.” Without successful leaders in these roles, an entire area of the company may fail.

With this level of challenge and risk, it is imperative for companies to maximize the likelihood that each of their functional leaders will be successful. This includes using proven, targeted assessments of the candidates, as well as ongoing coaching and mentoring of these leaders, especially within their first year of being placed in or promoted to these jobs.

For these leaders, E·A·S·I·Consult has identified the capabilities of:

- Accurate self-awareness coupled with an ability to adjust and be agile as a leader;
  - Establishing an environment of continuous improvement and then effectively motivating others to achieve their maximum abilities;
  - Establishing and facilitating teamwork among all members of the function; and possessing the strategic capability and agility to fully understand the company’s overall vision and goals; and
  - Effectively linking all of the work undertaken in the function to these overall goals.
3. **Leading an Enterprise Across the Organization.** Leaders at this level include division or company presidents and CEOs, as well as the CEO of the entire corporation. Transitioning to this level is much more focused on communication, perspective and values. Successful enterprise leaders must be extraordinarily visionary and strategic. In addition, being able to consistently demonstrate charisma while leading the entire enterprise is key.

Needless to say, these leadership positions involve the highest level of risk, so it is essential that an organization place significant investment in these leaders to maximize their likelihood for success. Based on our years of assessing and coaching enterprise leaders, E·A·S·I·Consult understands the three key capabilities at this level of leadership, including:

- Leading a large and diverse group of persons across the entire enterprise; therefore, superior levels of agile decision-making and global awareness, are essential;
- Demonstrating strategic foresight, which includes a level of strategic thinking and a capability to foresee potential opportunities and threats before your customers and competitors; and
- Creating a corporation that is distinct and provides a “value-proposition” that is superior to other companies in your industry.

As mentioned in previous leadership articles, E·A·S·I-Consult has identified and developed leaders who have successfully performed at each of these levels. And, beginning earlier this year, we integrated the Burke Learning Agility Inventory™ into several of our leadership assessment and coaching processes. Since this inventory measures a person’s ability to adapt to new business strategies, learn quickly, shift his or her learning style, and obtain and incorporate feedback, it allows E·A·S·I-Consult to provide more comprehensive and valuable leadership assessment and development.

### About the Author

*Joseph Gier, Ph.D., is vice president for consulting services for E·A·S·I-Consult®. As a licensed psychologist, Gier has identified and developed hundreds of leaders throughout the world. E·A·S·I-Consult works with Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and mid-sized corporations to provide customized Talent Management solutions. E·A·S·I-Consult specialties include individual assessment, online employment testing, survey research, competency modeling, leadership development, executive coaching, 360-degree feedback, online structured interviews, and EEO hiring compliance. The company is a leader in the field of providing accurate information about people through professional assessment. To learn more about E·A·S·I-Consult, visit <https://easiconsult.com> or email [ContactUs@easiconsult.com](mailto:ContactUs@easiconsult.com) or call 800.922.EASI.*