

What Makes A Superior Mid-Level Manager?

Every organization strives to identify and hire outstanding individuals for senior leadership positions. We have previously **identified the top three traits we've found in our work at E·A·S·I·Consult®** that all superior senior leaders share.

This month, I'm turning my attention to mid-level leaders and high-potential leaders. As it turns out, we can point to four traits that distinguish *superior* mid-level leaders from average leaders.

To be clear, this information is based on data. Over the past 15 years, E·A·S·I·Consult has worked with thousands of leaders in organizations throughout the world. Based upon data obtained from these leaders, I led a detailed study to identify the characteristics that differentiate *superior* mid-level leaders or high-potential leaders from *average* mid-level leaders.

Overall, we found that leadership makes a difference, and *superior* leaders - whatever level - can make an organization *superior*.

So what are the traits that differentiate superior mid-level and high-potential leaders from average leaders? As with superior executives, E·A·S·I·Consult found several key capabilities that make the difference.

1. **Accurately Understanding of Self.** Superior mid-level or high-potential leaders possess an accurate understanding of how others view them. In addition, these superior leaders know their own strengths and development needs, and they leverage their strengths while demonstrating a passion to learn and improve their weaknesses.
2. **Encouraging/Promoting Learning and Continuous Improvement among Team Members.** The second capability that superior mid-level and high-potential leaders demonstrate is related to the first capability. Building on their accurate understanding of self, superior leaders establish a culture that promotes and rewards ongoing learning and continuous improvement among all team members. Therefore, it is common for team members in a superior mid-level leader's department to be chosen for special projects, assigned to emergency task forces, and to be promoted into jobs in other teams or departments.
3. **Ensuring Team Members Work Collaboratively Throughout the Enterprise.** Superior mid-level and high-potential leaders establish a foundation for **“leading across the**

enterprise.” They create an expectation of teamwork that extends throughout the entire company. These superior leaders ensure that each member of their team works with colleagues throughout all units or departments in the company, not just with people in their own business unit or department. This capability also helps to build a **sense of common purpose (a feeling that “we’re all in this together”)** among members of the superior leader’s team.

4. **Understanding and Communicating the Company’s Vision and Mission.** The final differentiating capability of superior mid-level and high-potential leaders is the **consistent communication of the company’s vision, mission, values and goals.** These superior leaders model and reinforce the actions that each member of their team needs to undertake to achieve this vision and mission. This capability then reinforces the second capability, Promoting Learning and Continuous Improvement.

Looking at the four capabilities, we found some interesting comparisons to superior executives. First, capabilities 3 and 4 seemed to serve as precursors for two of the senior **executives’ capabilities. More importantly, the capabilities of superior executives were more** strategic, while still focused on a broader orientation. Therefore, once superior mid-level leaders have been identified, the organization should look to emphasize development opportunities that will enhance their strategic abilities, as well as their enterprise-wide and externally oriented capabilities.

As I noted in our November article, it is crucial for organizations to understand the capabilities that differentiate superior leaders from average leaders. By identifying current mid-level and high-potential leaders who possess several of these capabilities and are working to develop all four, an organization will be able to excel among its competitors.

In its work with clients, E•A•S•I-Consult uses an enhanced leadership assessment process - the EAQ[®] - to help organizations better understand the capabilities of each of their mid-level and high-potential leaders. The EAQ is a tool that allows companies to compare several candidates before making a hiring or promotion decision, or to tailor a development effort for current leaders.

About the Author

Joseph Gier, Ph.D., is vice president for consulting services for E•A•S•I-Consult[®]. As a licensed psychologist, Dr. 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 or call 800.922.EASI.