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What makes the ideal leader?

What then is the make-up of the ideal leader and the habits they must develop to become management leaders themselves?

Jeffrey Pfeffer, Professor of Organisational Behaviour at the Stanford Business School, has developed an excellent model of leadership. Professor Pfeffer is widely regarded by his peers as perhaps the leading writer on organisational structures and leadership. In his seminal book *Managing with Power—Politics and Influence in Organisations* he identifies six characteristics of the leader.

Energy

The first common characteristic of leaders (as opposed to other people) is their energy and physical stamina. Leaders are the first in the office and the last to leave. Before they get to the office and after they leave they participate in other activities. During the day they continue to be active in a round of meetings. They are rarely sick.

Focus

Contrary to the popular view, perhaps pushed by the recruitment consultants, successful general managers are not general. Typically the people who become managing directors do so by focusing their energy and avoiding wasted effort. They succeed by focusing their efforts in one industry and generally one company.

Empathy

Successful leaders are aware of other people. They spend time thinking about the behaviour and personality of their colleagues and employees. They put themselves in other people's shoes.

Flexibility

To succeed as a leader it is necessary to be able to modify one's behaviour. Flexibility is essential to success, particularly for managers. People may not like flexibility in the abstract but they do like what it is able to accomplish.

Conflict

Leaders are willing to engage, when necessary in conflict and confrontation. Many people believe that to get along you go along. This belief is inculcated from an early age. However, leaders have discovered that conflict will often provide you far more power than pliability.

Team spirit

While confrontation is a key to success, another key—particularly in the larger organisation, is the ability to submerge one's ego and become a team player during one's career.

What then are the emotional drivers of the ideal leader? The first is the Mover or M component. The M component provides two characteristics of the ideal leader, energy and team spirit. Movers have far more energy than any other component and their desire to meet and communicate with people makes them good team players.

The second key component is the Politician or P component. This provides two more characteristics of the ideal leader, conflict and focus. P style people naturally like to argue, they debate well and are usually forceful and articulate when expressing their views. In addition P style people see life as a competition, and more importantly as one they have to win. Thus when they join an organisation they soon set themselves the goal of working their way to the top. They will become focussed in that aim and generate much emotional energy getting there. The P is Machiavelli's lion.

The final key component is the Hustler or H component. This provides the empathy and flexibility so necessary for a leader's success. H-style people spend a lot of time trying to work out what other people are thinking and planning to do. They put themselves in other peoples' shoes which, of course is what empathy is all about. While empathy can be a learned skill, Hustlers do it naturally. In addition to natural empathy, H-style people have natural flexibility. Grahame Richardson, a successful Australian politician who had a lot of Hustler component in his personality, defined it well when he said the key to political success was '*doing whatever it takes.*' If that included having to be flexible about the truth, well that was a necessary evil. The H is Machiavelli's fox.

How do Australia's leaders stack up?

The most successful Australian Labor leader has been Bob Hawke. Under his leadership, Labor won four elections. Hawke is an excellent example of an HMP personality. Bob Hawke has demonstrated many of the characteristics of the Hustler component with his love of gambling, name dropping and financial opportunism since he left politics. His energy and desire to meet and talk with people was the stuff of legend and also a strong indicator of high Mover component. Finally even after winning four elections he still believed he would win a fifth. This compelling desire to win is a good indicator of the Politician component. Bob Hawke was one of those rare individuals who combined all three key emotional components and in turn these emotional drives were a strong reason for his political success.

His successor, Keating had two of three necessary components - the H and the P. Keating is certainly flexible and he carried out some stunning U-turns during his political career. Edna Carew, in her book on Keating, describes him as 'charming', another Hustler trait, but also quotes other people's descriptions of 'arrogant' and 'aggressive'. These are characteristics of the P component, which is very strong in Keating. Few people would have the focus to last as long as Keating as Treasurer, put through the reform agenda, raise a leadership challenge, fail and then succeed. What Keating lacks is a high Mover component. That was his fatal flaw - he did not genuinely want to meet people, and his energy levels were low. Keating is not a team player; instead he was often described as being autocratic.

Howard has only one of the three usual leadership emotional drivers, the P component. He is articulate, good in debate and certainly persistent. His other two strong components are the Normal and Doublechecker. Howard comes across as a compassionate, conscientious

individual. The Labor party often tried to criticise Howard for being overcautious and dithering. Howard certainly appears as if he dislikes making decisions which is in conflict with his P component. Ps generally like to make decisions. On the other hand, if a D decides to adopt a cause, he can attack it with an energy and persistence that surprises his colleagues. So it is with Howard when he attacked the issues of gun-control and tax reform.

The other strong component in Howard's personality is his Normal component. He dresses conservatively, comes across as a logical decision maker, and even now after substantial media scrutiny is still regarded by many as "Honest John." Howard has since become the second longest serving Prime Minister in Australia. He too has won four elections. A major reason for his success is that as he predicted "the times would someday suit him." The zeitgeist of the 1990s and early 2000s has been the Normal component: conservative, politically correct, conventional. Popular television shows, namely *Friends* and *Seinfeld*, were mainly about conventional people in a group situation.