

Leaders Speak

Diversified Search asked prominent industry leaders to answer two key questions about leadership today. The questions were:

1. From your perspective, what are key areas of focus on the agenda for contemporary leaders?
2. What skills or qualities are increasingly important for leaders to successfully address these priority areas?

Here are their answers.

Lou D'Ambrosio

Chairman, Sensus

Former CEO, Sears Holdings and Avaya

Developing a true global organization used to be a "nice-to-have" and has quickly become a "must have." Companies need to think globally and act locally. Companies also need to have 'speed with purpose.' The world is changing so rapidly that the only truism is that if you don't change, you die. A company's ability to rapidly adapt is extraordinarily important.

Two skill areas that are increasingly important for today's leader are "Problem Solving" and "Communications." The days of senior leaders staying in their corners offices are gone... and are not coming back. Today's leaders need to "get dirty." They need to roll up their sleeves. They need to spend a disproportionate amount of their time with customers. They need to be the chief strategists of the company. They need to be more than "two-sentences deep" on all the important topics of a company. Today's leaders need to be outstanding problem solvers. The second critical skill is communications. A great story not heard doesn't count. Leaders need to constantly

communicate with their employees -- one-on-one, in small groups, large groups, and the whole company. When a leader is tired or bored of saying the same message over and over, that is the exact time that he or she must repeat it again and again. It is easy to exaggerate how much employees digest. Clear, frequent, persuasive communications is critical in driving performance in an organization.

Rebecca Rimel

President & CEO

The Pew Charitable Trusts

A contemporary leader must focus on building a strong foundation of trust, integrity, and the courage to follow the strength of their convictions, while putting the interest of others ahead of self. In our current culture of self-promotion, it is easy to overlook the critical importance of humility, a tremendous asset in anyone, but especially so in a leader. Effective leaders must also adapt to uncertainty, and be both flexible and comfortable with the challenges and opportunities that come with it. Contemporary leaders should be willing to "speak truth to power" and demonstrate an

ability to adapt to evolving circumstances based on new facts and information in a rapidly changing environment. An understanding of the art and beauty of compromise is another highly valuable attribute—a leader should be able to foster a spirit of cooperation and respect, and place collective benefit and shared purpose ahead of personal preferences or agendas. Ultimately, leadership is not about self, but about stewardship: the care and cultivation of resources that best serve one’s institutional mission and the public good.

David L. Cohen

Executive Vice President

Comcast Corporation

Leadership today is even more complicated than in the past. In addition to classic leadership traits like inspiration, leading by example, effectively communicating, building collegial environments, and maintaining a sense of perspective, leaders today need to focus on diversity and inclusion, making the work place challenging and livable, and fostering an environment where work-life balance is a central part of an organization's culture.

Effective leaders today are more "democratic" -- more inclusive — more collaborative —focused on listening as well as talking — and very focused on team building.

Daniel J Hilferty

President & CEO

Independence Blue Cross

At Independence Blue Cross, more than 8,500 associates serve over 9 million people in 24 states and the District of Columbia. With a team that size, our key leadership challenge is fostering an environment where all of our associates know we are one team, all a part of the Independence family, regardless of our role, expertise, or physical location. This is a challenge faced by large, industry-leading companies throughout the world. Addressing it requires creating a culture that leads associates to always put the customer first and provide world-class service, and inspires us all to innovate, to constantly identify new and better ways to do things and challenge each other to be our best.

The most important skill of a leader is the ability to bring out the best talents of every individual on the team through open, honest communication and genuine collaboration. At Independence, we have something called “The Rules of the Road,” which sums up my leadership philosophy. These rules encourage our associates to respect one another, to be open to new ideas, and to work as one team to reach our goals.

I try to lead by example. Not long after I became CEO, I was very forcefully making a point in a meeting with our top executive team. One of the leaders said “Dan, I disagree and here’s why.” As he talked, I realized that he was correct and my position was flawed. I admitted this to the group and we moved on. After the meeting, that person came to me and said, “I hope you’re ok with what I said.” I told him, ‘OK with it? I wanted to hug you!’ His frankness with me demonstrated just the kind of openness and honesty we must have with each other to make sound, long-lasting decisions, lead effectively, and exceed our customers’ expectations.

Judith A Spires

President & CEO

King's Supermarkets

Today's leaders are different because today's consumers are different. In response, contemporary leaders need to take a layered approach: They need to understand how all of the various touch points influence an audience, whether that's the combination of goods, services, in-store and on-line experiences for customers or internal and external pressures for employees.

Successful leaders are visionaries. They live in today's fast-paced world, which requires them to embrace change and take risks grounded on their instincts. But, most importantly, they must build a committed team – full of talent, greater than their own, to continue to grow and guide their efforts forward.

Ed Lovelidge

Managing Partner

Philadelphia Metro at PwC

Key areas of focus are: The pace of change in technology – how to keep up with the digital world, innovation of new product and service offerings; new business models – alliances, partnerships and acquisitions to generate global growth at lower costs; and Talent Transformation – how to help current employees continue to develop, hire innovative employees skilled for the future and development of new forms of reward mechanisms for millennials.

Leaders today are expected to react quickly to disruptions caused by technology, new business models and talent. They are required to expect and be open to constant change. Their leadership must inspire creativity in the workplace and take chances on nontraditional

pools of talent. They should embrace technology changes as an advantage to develop new products/service or in responding to customer demands. Leaders must be flexible and dynamic in thinking about competing in a global market that is constantly redefined.

Daniel K. Fitzpatrick, CFA

President of Citizens Bank of PA / NJ / D

Mid-Atlantic Regional Executive of RBS Citizens

A key focus is managing the ever accelerating pace of change in our business environment and our world in general. Leaders need to be thoughtful and analytical, but decisive in setting strategy that is relevant in a global economy in which consumer preferences are evolving and technology moves us forward for connectivity and efficiency, but recruiting and retaining human capital as our most precious resource and asset needs to be the underlying basis of positive differentiation.

Given the pace of change, great leaders need to be continuous learners who are comfortable managing the soft issues of people and customers while being equally adept at managing the "hard skills" of products, technologies and finance. Finally, the ability to drive and foster a culture of innovation and inclusion is critical in assuring that their company is an employer of choice that remains in touch with the firm's customer base.

Nicholas DeBenedictis

Chairman, President & CEO

Aqua

It is vital to grow revenues in a sustainable and socially responsible manner and to manage business risks, while being as aggressive as possible in new business ventures and overall cost controls.

Skills and qualities needed include understanding of governmental policies and to be able to anticipate public policy trends on the future operations of your business. It is important to be a collegial leader with vision that employees want to follow as a fair, well-informed and confident executive.

Joseph H Capper

President & CEO

BioTelemetry Inc.

Rapid advancements in information technology continue to radically change the way we do business. Accordingly, today's leaders are more focused on how to use technology to market and enhance their businesses and on ways to properly collect, employ and secure important data. Also, work force make-up is more complex than ever before. Leaders are focused on the best ways to assemble and manage heterogeneous teams of individuals born in roughly four generations with vastly different experiences and interests. They are challenged with how to infuse far more flexibility into the work setting, from geographic and work time requirements to benefits and other incentives. Leaders that will excel in an environment of rapid change and less traditional business structure will be the more curious, creative, flexible and forward thinking. While a mastery of one's particular discipline will remain

important, especially as these areas become more embedded with specialized technology, a desire to acquire a working understanding of many areas of business will become a must. Hence, the specialized-generalist will have the advantage.

June Barry

Senior Vice President, Human Resources

AmerisourceBergen

Contemporary Leaders need to be change agents – embracing and proactively identifying new and different opportunities. Competitors, clients and the business landscape are constantly changing and therefore leaders need to think about constantly reinventing themselves and their teams to ensure continued relevance, competitive advantage, etc. The notion of servant leadership is not new, however it remains a critical leadership approach for the contemporary leader as people are the most important asset of any organization – and leaders have to take care of their team members through effective coaching, identifying growth & development opportunities, keeping them engaged and committed, etc. Contemporary Leaders need to be more experienced in managing an increasingly global, virtual and matrix workforce. Lastly, Contemporary Leaders must continue to develop their skills through ongoing education – staying abreast of emerging best practices and other contemporary issues.

To address these areas, leaders need gravitas, strong command of financials (business acumen), inspirational leadership, executive presence, global experience.

Antonio Alves

Principal, IFC – World Bank

**President, Harvard Business School Club,
Washington D.C.**

To be a great leader is not about being able to have all answers, but rather having the courage to ask the critical questions.

Quite often it transpires that the best leaders are naturally blessed with a talent for having the right answers. These perfect senior executives appear to have been born with exceptional instincts, natural charisma, great judgment, and an ability to inspire people surrounding them.

However, the real life is far more complex. The reality is that well accomplished leaders, no matter how gifted, go through uncertainty periods. Moments of isolation, confusion and even insecurity. An important turning point for those who reach their full potential is how they deal with these turbulent periods. The successful leaders know how to step back and ask the right questions, which will help them to gain insight, regroup, identify the root cause of a situation and act upon it.

Mary Stengel Austen

President and CEO

Tierney

I think the most important area of focus for contemporary leaders is helping their organizations learn to embrace change. The world is undergoing dramatic changes at an astounding pace, driven by technological advances, market trends and new generational workforce dynamics. Today's organizations must be nimble and able to pivot quickly in order to win tomorrow's opportunities. Contemporary leaders must help their organizations not only adapt to these changes, but compete in this new environment.

To embrace such rapid change, leaders must be nimble and responsive to constantly-shifting landscapes. They must create an environment where people can have both the courage and the candor to make change happen. Leaders must be unselfish and trust their teammates to lead, to follow and to deliver. And, finally, leaders must be relentlessly curious and harness the power of "why," always asking, always searching, always driving to what's next.