

Visionary Leadership and Managerial Competencies of Indian Managers

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Abstract

A review of the literature on the qualities of effective managers, leaders and world class or global manager indicates a good degree of consistency in the qualities required to be called a global manager. In these days, when mergers and acquisitions have become common and national boundaries are crossed with ease in acquiring new businesses and setting up new businesses, it is necessary to understand and acquire the competencies needed to be globally successful leader. This paper identifies 25 such qualities from a 360 feedback survey of 762 senior and top level managers from manufacturing, services and pharma sectors combined with those from a mix of organizations belonging to two leading business houses of India. An analysis of the open ended assessments given by nearly 7600 managers indicated the most frequently perceived strengths and weaknesses of Indian management. Job knowledge comes out as the most frequently observed strong point of Indian managers and this cuts across various sectors and business houses. Communication, team work, and hard work come out as other strong points of more than 20 per cent of Indian managers. Short temper, open-mindedness, and inability to build juniors are the most frequently mentioned areas needing improvement. Vision, values, strategic thinking, decision making skills, risk taking, innovativeness, ability to learn from mistakes, learning orientation and self renewal efforts, and cross cultural sensitivity are other qualities lacking in Indian managers to be called global managers. These qualities are either not exhibited dominantly or are not received by fellow managers. Future management education and management development programmes should focus on these qualities to prepare Indian managers to be world class managers.

Introduction

Much research is done internationally on the qualities of leaders and the qualities or behaviours that make managers effective. Stephen Covey's seven habits of effective people which has become a landmark work. While no amount of literature review will be sufficient to be called as comprehensive or adequate, the following studies are perhaps the most frequently quoted. Highlights from these studies can be taken to benchmark the qualities required to be a successful global manager or a business leader. In many ways literature on leadership can be taken as also indicative of the qualities needed to be successful global manager. Anyone aspiring to be a global manager has to think like a leader and demonstrate leadership qualities.

From a recent survey of various studies on adaptive organizations, Harwood (1992) prepared a checklist of 25 different characteristics. As a part of this research Harwood also outlined the qualities of adaptive managers. Some of these include: vision driven (think big, think long term), balance short and long term goals, persistence, curiosity, energy, self-motivation, unconventionality risk-taking, broad entrepreneurial background, open mindedness, active listening skills, ability to integrate, credit and empowers, others, continually learning* proactive, manage ambiguity, honor commitments-, deliver results, maintain character and values, creative, innovative, and change masters.

Review of Literature

"The scarcest resource in the world today is the leadership talent capable of continuously transforming organizations to win in tomorrow's world. The individuals and organizations that build Leadership Engines and invest in leaders developing other leaders have a sustainable competitive advantage" (p.8)

A good deal of insight into management and leadership has been provided by Tichy. Working closely Jack Welch and his team, Tichy laid the foundation for making managers effective and achieve results in GE. The following are some of the salient points (Tichy and Cohen 1997).

Warren Bennis says that the basis of the leadership is the capacity to change the mindset or framework of other persons (Tichy and Cohen, 1997).

Lee (1997) of after reviewing a number of studies on leadership states that leadership is, "an intensely human enterprise, and does not fit neatly into definitions and boxes. Leaders have all the spontaneity, unpredictability, frailty, vulnerability and potential that is possible in the human race. If we are to lead with honor, we must start with the premise that flexibility, adaptability, and wisdom are possible, that we have seeds of greatness in us, and if we care deeply about the lives of others, we can work together to accomplish worthwhile things." (p. 265).

Indian Studies

There have been many studies highlighting the qualities and characteristics of Indian leaders. (Sinha, 1995; Singh and Bhandarkar, 1990; Piramal, Gita 1996; Pandit, 2001; Srivastava, 2003; Chary, 2002, Pareek 2001)

(2001) emphasized that leaders should be institution builders. They should focus their attention on eight roles:

1. Identity creation
2. Enabling (resource creation)
3. Synergizing
4. Balancing (conformity and creativity)
5. Linkage building
6. Futuristic
7. Impact making
8. Creating superordination.

Lala's study (1986) of Indian leaders has proposed 13 qualities of leadership-communication; compassion; competence; courage; decision-making; humility and love; integrity; man-management; stamina; team work; training; and vision (Lala, 1986).

In a study comparing star performers with weak performers from a single company study of 25 top level managers assessed by 191 assessors in a 360 degree feedback programme Rao and Rao (2004) found the following:

1. The strengths mentioned for star performers were larger in number as compared to their weaknesses.
2. The following seem to characterize the star performer's strengths:
 - Confidence
 - Commitment (dedication, hard work; dependability)'
 - Job knowledge
 - Openness
 - People management skills
 - Result orientation.

There was no consistency in the weaknesses. However, rigidity and lack of receptivity seem to characterize more than two individuals among the star performers. Among the poor performers the common weaknesses seem to be listening skills and interpersonal relations especially in dealing with subordinates. At the same time, job knowledge and listening skills were their strengths. Other findings from this study were as follows:

1. Star performers seem to perform some leadership activities much better than weak and: average performers
2. Star performers do not delegate any more than the weak or average performers. They seem to do things more themselves than weak performers.
3. Star performers seem to be more proactive, innovative, change oriented, active, and communicative. Most other qualities don't seem to differentiate
4. Star performers seem to be more likely result oriented, receptive and open to change, communicative, committed, and dependable.
5. Star performers use more of development style while weak performers tend to use besides developmental a little more of benevolent style.
6. Star performers seem to create a climate of dependency and personal loyalty besides a climate of learning, satisfaction, and empowerment.

Objective of Study

This study was undertaken to find out the most frequently exhibited competencies of Indian managers and compare them with global competencies needed to be a good leader or manager. It also aims at understanding if there are any differences between the managerial competencies demonstrated in different sectors and groups. For the groups the study aimed examining if managers of different business houses demonstrate different competencies.

Methodology of the Study

Open ended feedback on 360 degree feedback of 762 senior and top level managers from 26 different organizations (manufacturing, services, pharma, and financial and other service sectors) were taken to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of top level executives. These managers were assessed by 7,620 other managers representing their juniors, seniors, and colleagues as required by the methodology. Self assessments were not included. The strengths and weaknesses were assessed in an open ended feedback format where each assessor indicated five strengths and five weakness or areas of improvement of the candidate. Assessors were given freedom to give less than three points for each candidate. Assessments of all the assessors were consolidated and from them a 360 degree feedback expert summarized a few of the consistently recurring strengths and weaknesses. For each candidate, on average the strengths and weaknesses worked to be about three. In some cases, the strengths were more than three and in a few cases two.

In order to see the competencies relevant to any sector or organization we have divided the sample organizations into three sectors: as manufacturing, services and pharma. In addition data from two of the leading business houses were included. Managers from the two business houses were drawn from various sectors including manufacturing and services, and they are presented separately.

Results

Competencies of Managers from Service Sector

The strengths and weaknesses of managers from the services sector are presented in Table 1. Feedback data for 235 candidates across service sector organizations brings out the following competencies as most frequently occurring:

1. Job/Domain/Functional Knowledge	-	36.17%
2. Communication Skills	-	36.17%
3. Team Work/Skills	-	31.91%
4. Calm and Composed/Patience	-	22.13%
5. Hardworking	-	21.70%
6. Positive Attitude/Thinking	-	19.15%
7. Interpersonal Skills	-	17.02
8. Delegation Skills	-	16.17%
9. Organizing Skills	-	15.74
10. Open Minded	-	11.91%
11. Approachable	-	11.49%
12. Motivation Skills	-	10.64%
13. Innovativeness	-	10.64%
14. Leadership Skills	-	10.64%

Competencies of Manufacturing Sector Managers (Table 1)

Feedback of 193 managers across the manufacturing sector showed the following as most frequently occurring competencies:

1. Job/Domain/Functional Knowledge	-	46.11%
2. CommunicationSkills	-	25.91%
3. Hardworking	-	23.83%
4. TeamSkills	-	21.76%
5. InterpersonalSkills	-	17.10%
6. Calm and Composed/patience	-	16.06%
7. Analytical Skills-	-	15.03%
8. Organizing Skills	-	14.51%
9. Delegation	-	13.47%
10. Honest/Integrity	-	11.92%
11. Approachable	-	10.88%

Competencies of Pharma Managers (Table 1)

For the pharma sector, the following as most frequently occurring competencies:

1. Job/Functional Knowledge	-	33.01%
2. Interpersonal: skills	-	23.30%
3. Communication Skills	-	23.30%

4. Delegation Skills	-	19.42%
5. Innovativeness	-	17.48%
6. Hardworking	-	16.50%
7. Team Work/Skills	-	15.53%
8. Open Minded	-	9.71%
9. Organizing Skills	-	9.71%

Job knowledge is the highest occurring competency across the three sectors. This is the top most competencies required to be successful on the job. Apart from this hardworking, communication skills, team skills, calm and composed are other frequently and commonly occurring competencies across the three sectors.

Rao and Selvan (1992) have pointed out good understanding of job as one of the more frequently mentioned characteristic of senior managers. Apart from this interpersonal skill, hard work, analytical skills, team building and organizing skills were also among the frequent occurring competencies.

The current study also points out that the most frequently occurring skills remain the same.

On the other hand, the pharma sector is going through a transition. Indian organizations have to compete with multinationals to survive and managers in these organizations need to have a global perspective which did not come out as strongly but at some places it was mentioned repeatedly.

The competencies identified above are largely Managerial Competencies and there seems to be a dearth of leadership competencies among the managers in pharma sector. Leadership competencies include motivating and influencing subordinates, vision sharing, setting personal examples and subordinate development. None of the above identified competencies show any of the leadership competencies as frequently occurring. In fact subordinate development has come out as one of the significant areas of improvement for managers.

Areas Needing Improvement

A combination of the data from all the three sectors indicate* the following as the most frequently mentioned weaknesses for more than 10% of the top and senior level managers.

Team skills, patience, delegation, subordinate development and interaction with subordinates, time management, assertiveness, and transparency are the major areas of improvement for managers across the sectors.

Subordinates feel that efforts for subordinate development, interactions with subordinates, and proper delegation of tasks will help managers improve their own effectiveness.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Senior and Top Level Managers from Two leading Indian Business Houses

The strengths and weaknesses of 231 senior and top level managers from two business houses. Some of the most frequently mentioned strengths and weaknesses of managers from these two business houses are somewhat varied from others. The most frequently mentioned strengths for more than 10% of the managers of the two groups combined.

The results are very similar to the other sectors indicating that Indian managers irrespective of where they work seem to exhibit similar strengths and

weaknesses.

Similar analysis for the combined group of 231 senior and top level managers from the business house

Short temper, assertiveness, subordinate development, openness, and interaction with juniors seem to be the areas needing improvement from senior managers of the two business houses. These are somewhat similar to other groups. The percentages however are larger.

Conclusions and Implications

The extent to which the strengths and weaknesses of Indian top and senior managers can be fitted into the qualities of world class managers Senior executives of Indian industry have a long way to be qualified as world class managers. They need to develop the following:

1. Vision
2. Continuous learning and learning sensitivity
3. Self-renewal (the fact most managers are still shy of getting 360 degree feedback done for themselves is itself an indicator)
4. Delegation
5. Empowerment
6. Ability to recognize, empower, and develop juniors
7. Result orientation
8. Perseverance
9. Integrating ability
10. Sense of priority and purpose (focus)

Future management development programmes and management education should focus on developing these competencies. Leadership development and competency building is a complex phenomenon. Indian managers seem to be good specialists. They do their job well and seem to- have a good degree of functional knowledge. What they need to be trained however is transformational competencies.

Table 1: Strengths as Assessed by the Juniors, Seniors and Peers of Senior and Top Level Managers from Services, Manufacturing and Pharma Sectors

si. No	Strengths	Services N=235	Percentage Score	MFG N= 193	Percentage Score	Pharma N= 103	Percentage
1	Approachable	27	11.49	21	10.88		
2	Analytical Skills	23	9.79	29	15.03	4	3,8
3	Calm and Composed	52	22.13	31	16.06	19	18.
4	Committed	14	5.96	23	11.92	8	7.7
5	Change Oriented	,		8	4.15	8	7.7
6	, Caring	7	2.98		0.00		0.0
7	Communication	85	36.17	50	25.91	24	23.
8	Co-operative	4	1.70	.	0.00		0.0
9	Customer Focus	23	9.79	15	7.77	1	0.9
10	Decision Making	20	8.51	17	8.81	2	1.9
11	Dedication	8	3.40	3	1.55	3	2.9
12	Delegation Skills	38	16.17	26	13.47	20	19.
13	Dependable	5	2.13		0.00	3	2.9
14	Disciplined	4	1.70		0.00		0.0
15	Energetic	10	4.26	3	1.55		0.0
16	Flexible	10	4.26	7	3.63		0.0
17	Friendly	13	5.53	6	3.11	2	1.9
18	Functional	8	3.40		0.00		0.0
19	Hardworking	51	21.70	46	23.83	17	16.
20	Helpful	10	4.26	8	4.15	4	3.8
21	Innovativeness	25	10.64		0.00	18	17.
22			0.00		0.00		0.0
23	Interpersonal Skills/Relationship	40	17.02	33	17.10	24	25.30
24	Honesty + Integrity	23	9.79	23	11.92	6	5.8
25	Job Knowledge/Industry/Function/Domain Knowledge/	91	38.72	89	46.11	34	33.01
26	Leadership Skills	25	10.64	13	6.74	7	6.8
27	Learning Orientation		0.00	9	4.66	8	7.7
28	Loyal	14	5.96	4	2.07	2	1.9
29	Motivation Skills	25	10.64	26	13.47	9	8.7
30	Negotiation Skills	5	2.13		0.00	1	0.9
31	Networking Skills	15	6.38.		0.00	9	8.7
32	Open Minded/Open	28	11.9T	18	9.33	10	9.7
33	Organising	37	15.74	28	14.51	10	9.7
34	Passionate		0.00	4	2.07		0.0

35	Performance	4	1.70		0.00		0.0
36	Positive Attitude/Thinking/	45	19.15	16	8.29	4	3.88
37	Proactive	14	5.96	8	4.15	5	4.8
38	Problem Solving	8	3.40	8	4.15		0.0
39	Quality Conscious	11	4.68	11	5.70	5	4.8
40	Result Oriented	10	4.26	8	4.15	3	2.9
41	Role Model		0.00	5	2.59	1	0.9
42	Sincerity	8	3.40	11	5.70	4	3.8
43	Social - 8	8	3.40	5	2.59		0.0
44	Strategic Thinking	9	3.83	4	2.07	4	3.8
45	Subordinate Development	10	4.26	15	7.77	5	4.85
46	Supportive	15	6.38	10	5.18		0.0
47	System Thinking	5	2.13				0.0
48	Systematic and. System Oriented			17	8.81	6	5.83
49.	Task/Target Oriented	5	2.13	8	4.15	4	3.8
50	Team work/Skills/PlayeF/	75	31.91	42	21.76	16	15.53
51	Transparent and Unbiased	7	2.98	9	4.66		0.00
52	Trustworthy	19	8.09	10	5.18	3	2.9
53	Time Management		0.00	3	1.55		0.0
54	Vision	6	2.55	12	6.22	3	2.91

Table 2: Weaknesses or the Areas Needing Improvement as Assessed by the Juniors, Seniors and Peers of Senior and Top Level Managers from Services, Manufacturing and Pharma Sectors

si. No	Areas of Improvement	Service s N = 235	Percent age Score	MFC N = 193	Percent age Score	Phar ma N=1	Percent age Score
1	Ability to Lead	4	1.70				
2	Acknowledging the subordinates	5	2.13			5	4.85
3	Aggressiveness	18	7.66			1	0.97
4	Analytical Skills	7	2.98				
5	Approachable	5	2.13				
6	Assertiveness	37	15.74	34	17.62	13	12.62
7	Calm and composed	11	4.68		0.00		
8	Conflict		0.00	7	3.63		
9	Communication	39	16.60	32	16.58		
10	Co-operative	4	1.70		0.00		
11	Cost Conscious	4	1.70	6	3.11	2	1.94
12	Decision Making	38	16.17	35	18.13	12	11.65
13	Customer	22	9.36	5	2.59		
14	Dedicated	3	1.28		0.00		
15	Delegation Skills	42	17.87	36	18.65		
16	Empathy and	10	4.26		0.00	8	7.77
17	Energy	9	3.83		0.00		
18	Flexibility	6	2.55		0.00	1	0.97
19	Initiative	4	1.70	11	5.70		
20	Innovative	8	3.40	11	5.70	3	2.91
21	Interaction	28	11.91	27	13.99	4	3.88
22	Interpersonal Skills/Relationship	26	11.06	21	10.88		21.36
23	Job/Subject/Functional Knowledge	24	10.21	17	8.81	5	4.85
24	Leadership Skills	9	3.83	4	2.07	1	0.97
25	Listening Skills	22	9.36	18	9.33	11	10.68
26-	Loyalty	3	1.28		0.00		
27	Monitoring	5	2.13		0.00	3	2.91

28	Motivation Skills	10	4.26	13	6.74	4	3.88
29	Negotiation	2	0.85		0.00		
30	Network	9	3.83	4	2.07	2	1.94
31	Open Minded/Open to	25	10.64	24	12.44	22	21.36
32	Organising	18	7.66	18	9.33		
33	Planning Skills	7	2.98	9	4.66	4	3.88
34	Positive Attitude	TO	4.26	14	7.25	4	3.88
35	Proactive	18	7.66		0.00	3	2.91
36	Problem Solving	2	0.85		0.00	2	1.94
37	Quality	5	2.13	3	1.55		
38	Reality	5	2.13		0.00		
39	Result Oriented	3	1.28		0.00		
40	Rigid Attitude	19	8.09	15	7.77	14	13.59
41	Sharing Info	6	2.55		0.00		
42	Sociable	5	2.12	4	2.07		
43	Strategic	5	2.13		0.00	2	1.94
-44	Subordinate	27	11.49	27	13.99	15	14.56
45	Supportive	3	1.28		0.00		
46	Task Oriented	2	0.85	4	2.07		
47	Team Work/ Player/Skills/B	42	18.30	24	12.44	12	11.65
48	Control Temper/impatience/Short Temperament	36	15.32	35	18.13	34	33.01
49	Biased/Transpa	22	9.36	12	6.22	7	6.80
50	Time	28	11.91	20	10.36	12	11.65
51	Trust Other	12	5.11	8	4.15	3	2.91
52	Vision	6	2.55	11	5.70	1	0.97

Table 3: Strengths as Assessed by the Juniors, Seniors and Peers of Senior and Top Level Managers from Two Leading Indian Business Groups

Strength	Business Group 1 N=106	Percentage	Business Group 2 N=125	Percentage
Active	12	11.32		0
Approachable			9	7.2
Assertiveness			9	7.2
Analytical Skills	4	3.77	3	2.4
Calm and Composed	30	28.30	14	11.2
Communication Skills	6	5.66		0
Commitment	6	5.66	27	21.6
Communication Skills	19	17.92	20	16
Cost Conscious	20	18.87	1	0.8
Customer Orientation	4	3.77	2	1.6
Decision Making	4	3.77	4	3.2
Dedicated	4	3.77	1	0.8
Delegation	5	4.72	9	7.2
Dynamism			6	4.8
Flexible	4	3.77	5	4
Hardworking	38	35.85	25	20
Helpful	5	4.72	13	10.4
Integrity, & Honest	4	3.77	25	20
Innovative	17	16.04	5	4
Interpersonal Skills	17	16.04	38	30.4
Job/Functional Knowledge	48	45.28	40	32
Leadership Skills	6	5.66	7	5.6
Learning			4	3.2
Listen	7	6.60	8	6.4
Motivation Skills	7	6.60	11	8.8
Negotiation	1	0.94	1	0.8
Networking Skills	15	14.15	3	2.4

Open Minded	11	10.38	18	14.4
Organized	12	11.32	17	13.6
Participative	5	4.72		0
People Oriented	7	6.60	7	5.6
Planning	2	1.89	2	1.6
Positive Attitude/thinking	19	17.92	7	5.6
Proactive	8	7.55	1	0.8
Professionalism			7	5.6
Quality Conscious	12	11.32		0
Result Oriented	7	6.60	6	4.8
Sincere	12	11.32	24	19.2
Sociable	7	6.60	1	0.8
Subordinate Development	5	4.72	4	3.2
Task Oriented	8	7.55	5	4
Team Work/Player/Skills	13	12.26	23	18.4
Time Management			2	1.6
Transparent	3	2.83	13	10.4
Trustworthy	3	2.83	6	4.8
Vision	1	0.94	0	0

Table 4: Weaknesses or Areas Needing Improvement Strengths as Assessed by the Juniors, Seniors and Peers of Senior and Top Level Managers from Two Leading Indian Business Groups

Improvement Area	Business Group 1 N=106	Percentage	Business Group 2 N=125	Percentage
Acknowledges Others			4	3.2
Analytical Skills	3	2.83	5	4
Assertiveness	24	22.64	27	21.6
Change Orientation	5	4.72		0
Communication Skills	22	20.75	18	14.4
Cost Conscious	3	2.83	1	0.8
Decision Making	16	15.09	10	8
Delegation	18	16.98	11	8.8
Empathic	3	2.83	10	8
Flexible	2	1.89	2	1.6
Interaction with Subordinates	18	16.98	23	18.4
Interpersonal Skills	22	20.75	13	10.4
Knowledge	5	4.72	6	4.8
Leadership Skills	10	9.43	6	4.8
Listening Skills	15	14.15	13	10.4
Motivation Skills	8	7.55	5	4
Networking	10	9.43	2	1.6
Openness/Open to Ideas Change/Rigidity	26	24.53	19	15.2
Organized	9	8.49	6	4.8
Planning	9	8.49	6	4.8
Proactive	1	0.94	17	13.6
Risk Taking	3	2.4		
Strategic Thinking	10	8		
Sharing Information	5	4.72	2	1.6
Subordinate Development	17	16.04	30	24
Team Work	9	8.49	14	11.2
Temper Control	38	35.85	22	17.6
Tendency to be Biased/Transparent	17	16.04	7	5.6
Time Management	8	7.55	15	1.2
Trusting Others	9	8.49	4	3.2
Vision	4	3.77	3	2.4

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