

## **5 Dimensions of Leadership**

By Wayne Wilson

**Leadership is often hard to define.** Rather than try, many people simply say, “I know it when I see it.” Indeed, stories are an essential mode by which we communicate important values to other people.

Stories can illustrate instances of brilliant leadership as well as describe abysmal failures. They are descriptive but not necessarily prescriptive. And they are often not very useful in helping a person to understand what exactly they need to do to become an effective leader.

**Leadership has multiple dimensions.** It takes many different forms depending on the timing and nature of the challenges an organization faces. Some of these dimensions come naturally to a would-be leader while others must be learned or otherwise compensated for.

The truly great leaders are those who can effectively integrate these multiple dimensions into a unified and flowing whole persona.

**Here are five important dimensions of effective business leadership:**

### **1 – Strategist**

The CEO or equivalent organizational leader is by definition the organization’s chief strategist. While not responsible for coming up with every important idea, the CEO/chief strategist must integrate internal and external ideas and input into a holistic picture of the organization’s opportunities and risks as a basis for moving the organization forward.

The strategy must be fact-based, goal-oriented, and attainable, and the CEO/chief strategist must be accountable for it.

### **2 – Translator**

An organization’s constituencies often speak different languages. The CEO/leader must be able to translate financial information for the non-financial types, personnel matters for the non-HR types, management’s views to the board of directors or investors and vice versa, etc.

Accurately representing complex information to multiple constituencies is a high art which must be learned by anyone aspiring to a significant leadership role.

### 3 – Evangelist

Leaders must also be able to motivate people throughout the organization to take action. Leaders must convey the fervor they hold for the organization's prospects while clearly articulating the organization's mission, vision, values, strategy and direction.

Once the strategy has been developed and communicated throughout the organization, nothing much good will happen unless the leader can cause the organization to spring into action. Evangelism drives action.

### 4 – Generalist

Most leaders rise through an organization's ranks and have their roots in one or more functional disciplines (sales, manufacturing, finance, etc.). While leaders do not necessarily need to know everything about every discipline, they do need to have a working knowledge about all of them.

Most significant business problems are multi-disciplinary, and no one functional discipline has all the answers. Leaders need to know when to ask tough questions and what kinds of questions to ask.

They need to develop a strong sense of smell. Does the information they receive smell right? Do the answers make sense? Are the proffered solutions responsive to the problem or challenge at hand?

### 5 – Facilitator

Finally, the CEO/leader must be able to bring different experts, departments, factions or constituencies together to effectively solve problems. They must be able to facilitate conflict resolution and bring about consensus. Left to their own devices, 100 people will go off in about 50 different directions.

Leadership is often about herding cats – allowing for individual initiatives while gently moving the whole group in the targeted strategic direction and occasionally corralling those who stray too far from the herd.

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Although there are many other important dimensions of leadership, these five are essential ingredients for effective business leadership.

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