

Leadership 2022 Style

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From the Founder of a start-up to the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, leadership is all about inspiring others. Pre-pandemic, in addition to being a motivator, leadership was defined as being: Visionary, Strong, Smart, Commanding, Driven, Decisive, and At the Front of the Room.

The pandemic has uprooted norms across the world. It forced leaders to become expert crisis managers at the same time that it demanded increased compassion and attention to social issues in the workplace. In 2022, characteristics that signal today's leaders

are: Innovative Thinker and Doer, Humble, Compassionate, Motivational, Transparent, Flexible, Purpose-Driven, and In the Middle of the Room.

Today's Innovative Thinker Needs A Plan

More than ever before bold innovative leaders need action plans. A strategic vision without the implementation roadmap is incomplete. Leaders also need the freedom to pivot given the uncertainty and volatility in the world. In many organizations the planning foundation, a 3+ year strategic plan, is no longer productive or realistic. Today's big-picture thinkers, with imagination and creative intuition, also need strong management skills, or partners who bring management skills, to turn a vision into a reality and position their business for success.

Strong, Yet Humble

Today's leaders are good listeners and good team players. Although it is an overused phrase, "there's no I in TEAM" rings true. 2022 leaders are willing to hear other points of view, to evolve their own thinking and change direction, to grow stronger by collaborating with others rather than through rugged individualism. They can no longer lead standing in front, talking down to others. Today they need to be in the center, bringing people with different perspectives into the conversation, empowering their teams and stimulating creativity.

At the same time, the effective 2022 leader takes responsibility for mistakes, adjusts to correct errors, and shares information so everyone else learns, too. When appropriate, saying *I'm Sorry!* earns respect and trust. It creates a safe, open environment that reinforces innovation and avoids blame culture. And of course, saying *Thank You!* demonstrates appreciation. Today's great leaders celebrate their teams' achievements, so successes are owned by all.

IQ plus EQ plus AQ

Today's top leaders need to be smart, self-assessing to, in the language of tools such as Hogan Assessments, understand their own bright and dark sides. They must manage their own emotions and influence the emotions of others. They must always be aware of how their teams are feeling, reading verbal and non-verbal cues.

2022 leaders must also address resistance and conflict quickly and effectively. According to Ed Boeve, Managing Partner of IMSA Search Global Partners Netherlands, "It is essential to consider AQ, the level of mental resilience that enables one to handle opposition and setbacks. When I speak with my customers, they are interested in leaders who are not only smart and sophisticated emotionally, but also deal well with adversity."

Sensitive and Compassionate

With sensitivity, great leaders check for unconscious bias, starting with themselves. Are they treating people of different genders, races, and backgrounds differently, and if yes, why? Then they confirm that their organization structure and company policies align with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) goals. They welcome diversity as critical to ensuring different ways of thinking, including in the C-Suite.

With compassion, great leaders regularly check in with employees – assessing the stresses of physical and mental health, working from home, childcare and eldercare, Zoom fatigue, and overall burnout. Then, they ensure that policies and benefits address employees' current needs.

Motivational and Transparent

The 2022 leader will be leading hybrid teams, operating from different and distant locations. To be effective in the role of cheerleader and motivator when some people are in the room while others are in different time zones, will require investing in and embracing new technology, new communication techniques, and increased openness. In 2022, exceptional communication skills are mandatory.

While transparency was always important, in 2022 it takes on even greater meaning. Transparent means being upfront when plans change. When employees trust their leaders, they feel supported. They become more engaged; they become brand champions; they become more productive.

Purpose-Driven

As Alexander Hamilton said, "Those who stand for nothing fall for anything." Today's great leaders are committed to creating a corporate culture that reinforces brand values, values that represent what the company stands for. Values need to be actively embedded in company actions, drivers in decision making, woven into communications. And employees expect their company to lead with purpose, authentically, reflecting a recognition of the company's role and influence in the communities where they operate.

Flexible and Resilient

Many of today's leaders had not previously led through periods of such uncertainty. Yet their ability to navigate new approaches has led them through the pandemic. IMSA Search Global Partners President Monika Ciesielska says, "Several of the CEO's I spoke with told me they could never have imagined the challenges that the pandemic delivered, but they also shared stories that demonstrated their tenacity, their ability to innovate and pivot, and their resilience."

"Failing forward" has become a popular term, emphasizing the importance of piloting new technology, creating new formulas, exploring new processes, developing new programs. The courage to fail and the resiliency to permit others to fail is essential for business growth.

Local Leader, Global Leader

Technology has created a totally connected world. Today's great leaders must think and act globally. They must welcome knowledge that comes from new sources and consider partnerships that expand their boundaries. However, they must simultaneously remember that their employees and customers are individuals, living in local communities – and they must be able to understand and respond to local needs.

To be a great leader in 2022 requires the ability to reflect, reimagine, and respond – starting with analyzing learnings from pandemic leadership mode that will be useful to embed for the future. For those companies that have the right leadership teams, the opportunities to succeed in our ever-changing, digital, interconnected world are extraordinary.

