



A CCL Research White Paper

# Everyday Leadership

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Center for  
Creative  
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# Everyday Leadership

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**As noted by INSEAD in 2002, leadership is the most studied aspect of all human behavior. A simple search of Amazon.com reveals over 3,000 books published on leadership last year and over 12,000 in the last five years. However, the majority of our knowledge about leadership is focused on the ivory towers of our corporations, the hallowed grounds of our nations' capitals, and the rank-and-file of our armed forces.**

What about the other leaders, the everyday leaders? What about our stay-at-home moms, our small business owners, our students, our doctors, and our educators? This study, titled *Everyday Leadership*, was commissioned by a team of CCL faculty and staff charged with exploring future markets, products, and services for the Center for Creative Leadership. The study attempts to better understand these non-traditional leaders by gaining additional insights into their personal lives, their thoughts and theories about the practice of leadership, and their hopes for the future.

Over a six-month period late in 2005, 31 respondents completed an hourlong telephone interview focusing on aspects of their personal life, their approach to leadership, and their potential future needs. The 31 respondents were broken up into five categories:

- Educators
- Atypical Leaders
- Public Sector
- Professional Services
- Small Business Owners

## THE DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP IS STABLE

The definition of leadership (though diverse among the sample) hit on some key aspects that positively align with the work CCL has been doing with business leaders for over 30 years. Specifically, the concepts of vision, change, focusing resources, inspiration, and mentoring were clearly articulated. Thus, we have resources that could be of use to these other markets.

## RELATIONSHIP BUILDING IS A KEY SKILL NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Consistent with the findings of the 2006 *Changing Nature of Leadership Report*, interpersonal openness and building relationships are key skills for everyday leaders. Additionally, organization skills (time and project management) rose to the top as well. What is driving these results? Based on work with business leaders, we know that rapid change and uncertainty are two major forces.

## LEADERSHIP BOOKS ARE NOT ON THE RADAR

Over 70 percent of our respondents have read either a “non-traditional” leadership book (self-help or memoir/fiction) or none at all. Additionally, when we examined the magazine choices, typical leadership magazines like *Fast Company*, *Harvard Business Review*, and *BusinessWeek* were rarely mentioned as preferred reading material.

## BUILD A COMPELLING STORY AND THEY WILL COME

When we probed further into why they chose their most-memorable books, it was because the story included struggle, compelling characters, was relevant to their personal journey, and provided further education. We must begin looking at alternative publication options if we are going to pique these everyday leaders' interest.

## GREAT LEADERS ARE A THING OF THE PAST

When asked whom they revere as a great leader, the vast majority of responses focused on past political leaders, dating even back to Lincoln and Washington. Very few of these individuals mentioned leaders in their own fields or within their current organizations. How could CCL help to amplify the presence of great current leaders?

## PROFILES TELL A DIVERSE STORY

The profiles of each everyday leader category tell of some commonalities but a great deal of diversity. We will have to practice mass customization to meet them where they live.

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## WHO TOOK PART IN THE SURVEY?

Over a six-month period late in 2005, 31 respondents completed an hourlong telephone interview focusing on aspects of their personal life, their approach to leadership, and their potential future needs.

### PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The 31 respondents were broken up into five categories: Educators, Atypical Leaders, Public Sector, Professional Services, and Small Business Owners. The titles and roles are shown in Fig. 1.

### GENDER BREAKDOWN

The proportion of men to women was fairly equal with men representing 55 percent of the sample while women represented 45 percent. The majority of the women came from the professional services and atypical leader categories while the men came from the public sector and the small business owner categories.

FIGURE 1

CATEGORY	TITLE	NUMBER
Educators	Professor	2
	Principal	2
	Secondary School Teacher	2
Atypical Leaders	Peace Corps Volunteer	2
	Stay-at-Home Mom	2
	College Student	2
Small Business Owners	Car Dealership Owner	1
	Investment Firm Owner	1
	Renovation Firm Owner	1
	Consulting Firm Owner	1
Professional Services	Anesthesiologist	1
	MD	2
	Veterinarian	1
	Attorney	3
	Marketing Manager (Private Firm)	1
Public Sector	Accountant	1
	Judge	1
	Rabbi	1
	Police Sergeant	1
	Mayor	1
	Not-for-Profit Director	1
	School Board President	1

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## WHAT WERE THE OVERALL FINDINGS?

### THE DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP

We asked respondents how they would define leadership in their field. Though the leaders came from many different walks of life, there were some common elements that we pulled together into this definition.

*Leadership is the ability to create of a vision for positive change, help focus resources on right solutions, inspire and motivate others, and provide opportunities for growth and learning.*

Some examples of specific definitions are from each category are:

*Inspiring people to seek out, refine and express their truth; developing a sense of connection and community; guiding a decision-making process that fosters communication and helps people make the best decisions for their future.*

– Rabbi, Public Sector

*Being competent, being good at what you do, and having good interpersonal skills with colleagues (doctors and nurses) and patients. Also, you must demonstrate confidence and competency in your field at all times, so parents and patients will trust you.*

– MD, Professional Services

*Providing clients with a solution that shows great insight. The goal of leadership in my business is winning as many clients as possible.*

– Consultant, Small Business

*Spiritually setting an example for the kids, watching everything they do, and being energetic and patient every day ... I am the CEO of my house. My husband has no clue what goes into running the house. From 3 to 8 p.m., I must be 100 percent with my kids. It is a full-time job.*

– Stay-at-Home mom, Atypical Leaders

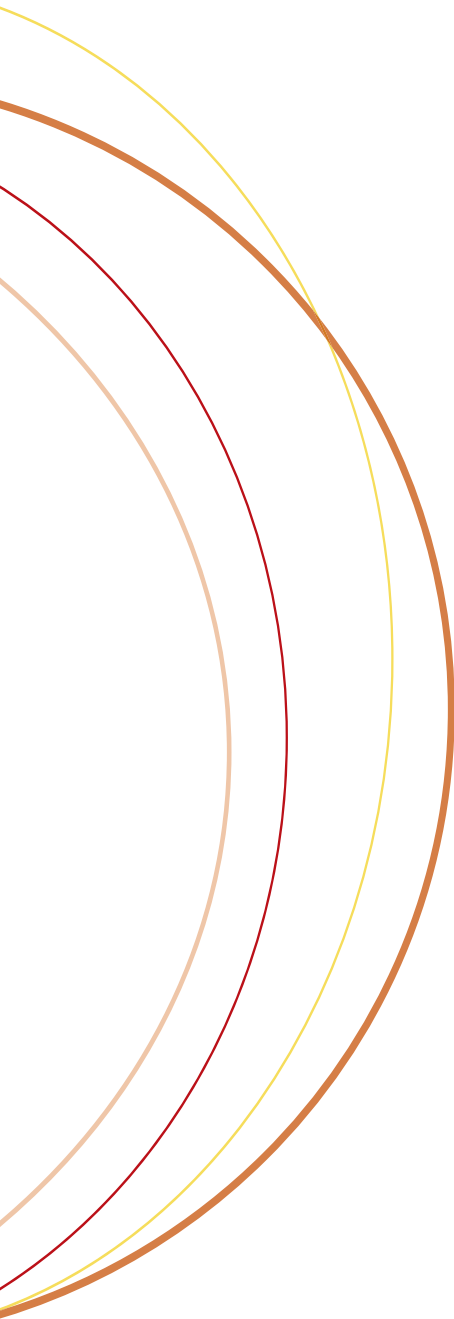
*As a professor, leadership is the capacity to stimulate and effectively guide students in understanding the application and value of classes and the substance of what is being taught. Creating an effective environment for students to learn and be stimulated.*

– Professor, Educators

### THE MOST IMPORTANT LEADERSHIP SKILLS TODAY

We asked respondents to provide one or two skills important for leaders in their field. Though over 25 different skills were mentioned, we were able to cluster responses into 10 major categories as shown in Fig. 2. Consistent with other CCL research (see the Changing Nature of Leadership Report), interpersonal openness/relationship building rose to the top as the most mentioned. This skill was followed closely by commitment (hard work), demonstrated knowledge (technical skills) and organization skills (project and time management). Base on these results, it seems that complexity, uncertainty, and a need for connections is driving everyday leaders in a manner similar to business leaders.

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## OVERALL FINDINGS (continued)

FIGURE 2

Key Leadership Skills - Today	Rank
Interpersonal Openness/Relationship Building	1
Commitment	2
Demonstrated Knowledge (Technical Skill)	3
Organization Skills (Project & Time Management)	4
Persuasion/Negotiation	5
Patience	6
Confidence	7
Decisiveness	8
Ethics/Integrity	9
Positive Attitude/Optimism	10

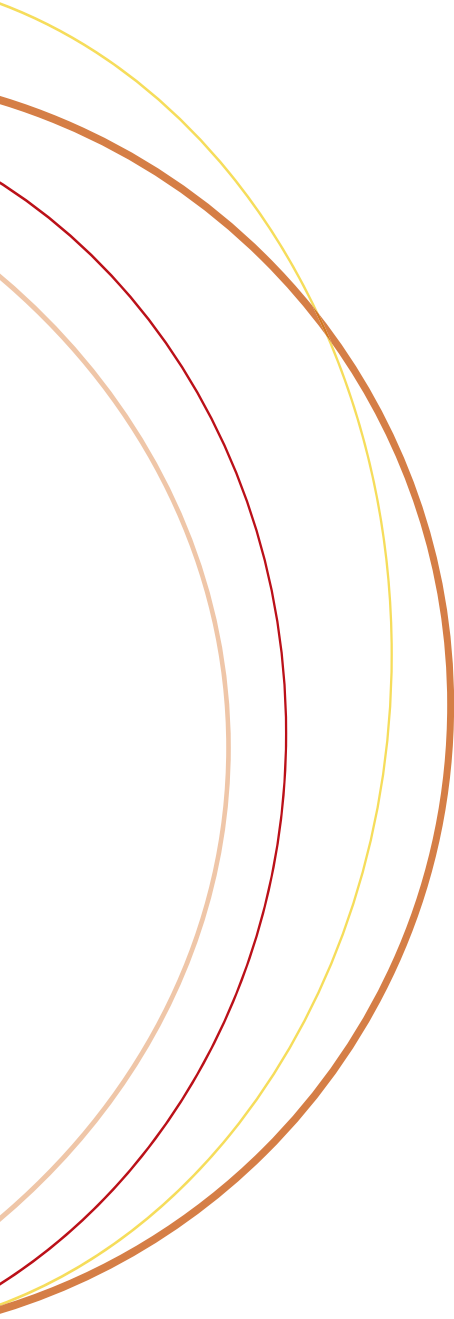
## FUTURE LEADERSHIP SKILLS

The trends in the data for future leadership skills that will be important for success did not vary greatly from the current skills (see Fig. 3). Interpersonal Openness topped the list with Organization Skills a close second. There was a rise in the skills of Communication, Delegation, and Visionary which tend to suggest that leaders will need to be even more cognizant of where they are taking people and provide opportunities for those people to feel involved.

FIGURE 3

Key Leadership Skills - Future	Rank
Interpersonal Openness/Relationship Building	1
Organization Skills (Project & Time Management)	2
Persuasion/Negotiation	3
Communication/Feedback	4
Demonstrated Knowledge (Technical Skill)	5
Delegation	6
Visionary	7
Patience	8
Decisiveness	9
Confidence	10

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## OVERALL FINDINGS (continued)

### MOST MEMORABLE BOOK

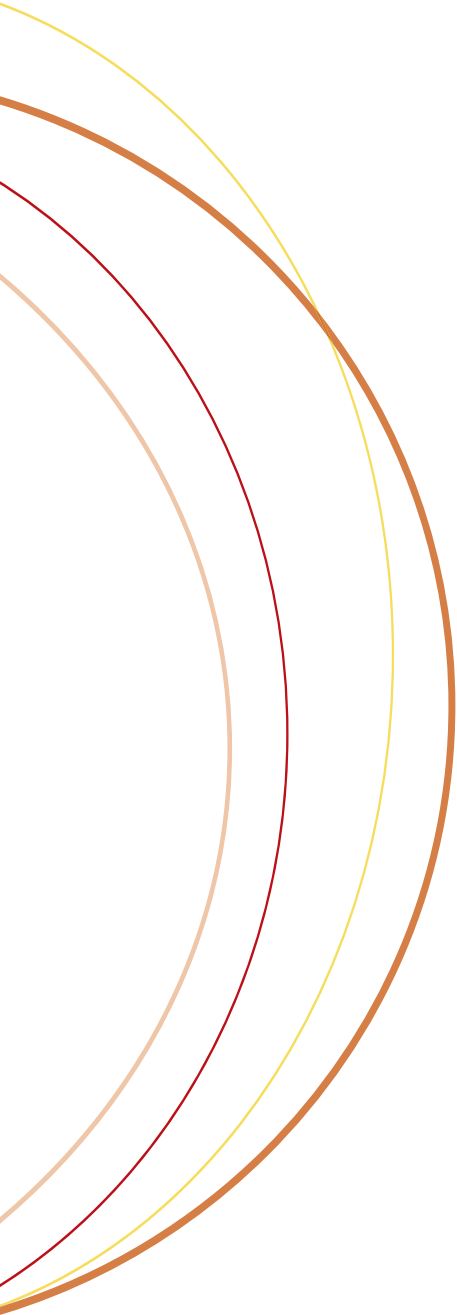
We asked our respondents to share the most memorable book they have read (see Fig. 4) and why. The intention of this question was to uncover the compelling aspects of great writing to help us publish books and products that catch the eye of these everyday leaders. The books mentioned fell mostly into the fiction category (48 percent) followed by Non-fiction/Historical (19 percent) and Self-Help/Business (16 percent). The identifying characteristics that respondents said made the books stand out were:

- Focused on a struggle
- Had compelling characters
- Was educational or informative
- Had relevance to the person’s life
- Provided inspiration
- Followed a character on a journey
- Told of a journey

FIGURE 4

Book Category	Title	Rank
Fiction	Ship of Gold	48%
	East of Eden	
	Time Traveler’s Wife	
	Middlesex	
	Old Man and the Sea	
	To Kill a Mockingbird	
Non-Fiction/ Historical	Into Thin Air	19%
	Tuesdays with Morrie	
	Plato’s Dialogues	
	Don’t Know Much About History	
	Nickle and Dimed	
Self-Help/Business	Warren Buffett Way	16%
	Road Less Traveled	
	Heart of Conflict	
	Color of Water	
Other	Hoot (Children’s Book)	16%
	Bible	
	Handmade Tales	
	Profit	

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## OVERALL FINDINGS (continued)

### MOST MEMORABLE LEADERSHIP BOOK

This question was meant to identify if everyday leaders read popular leadership books, if they choose other books, or if they did little or no reading of leadership books at all. The most interesting result is that just about 70 percent of the respondents read non-traditional leadership books or no leadership books at all. Of the books cited, they fell into four categories: Self-help (25 percent), Business/Leadership (28 percent), Other (22 percent), and None (25 percent).

FIGURE 5

Book Category	Title	Rank
Self-help	Seven Habits of Highly Effective People	25%
	How to Win Friends and Influence People	
	Swim with the Sharks	
	Kitchen Table Wisdom	
	First Days of School	
	Gardening In the Minefield	
Business/ Leadership	Art of the Deal	28%
	What They Don't Teach You at Harvard	
	Winning	
	Effective Executive	
	Business Leadership	
Other(Memoirs, Fiction, Etc)	Who Moved My Cheese?	22%
	Leader's Guide to Standards	
	Leading Change	
	Credibility	
None	One Minute Manager	25%
	Bible	
	The Prince	
	On Doctoring	
	Rules for Radicals	
	Madam Secretary	
	If You Don't Feed the Teachers	
	Win-Win	
	Wars of the World	



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## WHAT IS THE PROFILE OF AN EDUCATOR LEADER?

### CHALLENGES FACED DAY-TO-DAY

The challenges faced by these leaders dealt almost entirely with their interaction with students, parents, and other stakeholders. Generally, there was a sense of being overwhelmed by the multiple tasks in a given day and the importance of their role: finding time and resources to develop others, motivate students, meet their non-teaching responsibilities, and developing relationships.

### MAGAZINES/BOOKS READ

The educators split their time among association magazines, popular professional, and public interest. However, the number of magazines cited is much lower than other groups, which may signify the sheer pace of their lives. As for the most memorable books, these ranged from Plato's Dialogues to Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. The overall themes of the books were life lessons, values, and meaning. Again, this is very fitting given the type of leadership role taken by educators.

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Currently, the classes educators are involved in are almost entirely centered on continuing education and range from graduate school to conference attendance. One individual did mention a traditional "leadership development" course. The course was offered by the county government and focused on balance. In the future, these leaders would be most likely to seek "leadership development" via mentoring or books.

### KEY LEADERSHIP EVENTS

When asked to share a key event that helped them become a leader, the responses ranged from serving in Vietnam to the birth of a first child. However, the prevailing sentiment was that learning to become a leader is a journey and not an event. One person even described it as a "metamorphosis."

The lessons that were learned included:

- To gain commitment, you must ask questions and know people on a personal level.
- A leader must show responsibility, loyalty, and commitment.
- To teach is to inspire. A teacher must encourage others to succeed.
- You do not know responsibility until you have a child. They open your eyes to the world.

### IMPACT OF THEIR LEADERSHIP

When asked to examine the impact they are having as leaders, the educators predominantly focused on developing others. Specifically, they said "help others make good/ethical decisions," "develop productive citizens," and "touch the lives of others." These impact statements speak to the passion they have for their work.

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## PROFILE OF AN EDUCATOR LEADER (continued)

### GREAT LEADERS

The leaders identified by our sample were Martin Luther King Jr., a respondent's mother, Jack Welch, Ronald Reagan, a professor, and a principal. The qualities that made them exceptional included:

- Being committed to a cause
- Energy and passion
- Personal presence
- Courage to change
- Willingness to teach others

## WHAT IS THE PROFILE OF AN ATYPICAL LEADER?

### CHALLENGES FACED DAY-TO-DAY

As this group had a good deal of diversity (from Peace Corps volunteers to college students), finding a common ground regarding the challenge was, well, a challenge. However, for each of these individuals there seemed to be a reliance on the self as a constant theme, that there was little support to aid them. This was true from the former Peace Corps volunteer, who is now an educator having to develop experiences for a class that mixes adults and children of varying ethnic backgrounds, to the consultant working without a BlackBerry or assistant, to the stay-at-home mom who must juggle the world.

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The types of classes being taken by these leaders fell into two categories. The first were academic classes either for graduate school or personal development. The second were recreational classes focusing on fitness, prenatal lessons, and working/living overseas. Only one participant mentioned a traditional leadership course (that course happened to take place at CCL). As for future development opportunities, these leaders focused on mentoring and classes, but also suggested two new categories of online learning and interactions with others.

### KEY LEADERSHIP EVENTS

An interesting similarity between these Atypical Leaders is that their key leadership events were a result of unexpected obstacles or choices. From the college student presented with living on his own worlds away from home to the unexpected job offer that caused a major career shift, the following lessons were learned:

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## ATYPICAL LEADER (continued)

- Strategies on how to keep many irons in the fire at the same time
- Challenge and pay attention to the unknown
- Be ready for anything
- Be authentic
- Live in the day you have

## IMPACT OF THEIR LEADERSHIP

Similarly to the educators, these leaders generally hope they are helping to shape the people they come into contact with. For the mother, it is by raising good kids, for the English teacher it is about teaching others how to learn, and for the past Peace Corps volunteer it is leading by example, by teaching people how to take risks.

## GREAT LEADERS

Political leaders Bill Clinton, John F. Kennedy, and Nelson Mandela were identified along with a mentor, a husband, and a school administrator. These individuals were identified because of the following characteristics:

- Unique ability to relate to others
- Unbiased educator who connected with his students
- Patience and forgiveness
- High standards combined with humor
- Aura without power and authenticity

## WHAT IS THE PROFILE OF A PUBLIC SECTOR LEADER?

### CHALLENGES FACED DAY-TO-DAY

The challenges for this group (which included a judge, a police sergeant, and mayor) focused on balancing multiple demands, both in the tasks they are asked to do and the relationships they must manage. On the task side, the challenges have to do with finding time for both professional and personal pursuits, prioritizing effectively, and finding time to problem-solve. On the relationship side, the challenges have to do with keeping others motivated in tough times, setting boundaries and sticking to them, and balancing multiple political agendas.

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The types of classes preferred by these leaders were in the realm of professional development and focused mostly on improving technical skills related to their specific careers through one-day courses, college courses, or conference attendance.

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## **PUBLIC SECTOR LEADER (continued)**

However, in one case (the police officer) there was a two-week leadership development course offered internally. Also, a few of the participants mentioned personal development courses focusing on yoga, meditation, and dance. When asked about future leadership development opportunities, these leaders were most likely to rely on books or classes.

## **KEY LEADERSHIP EVENTS**

The common thread between these leaders and their key events has to do with challenging assignments. From the leader who was deployed with Desert Storm to the leader who had to help pick up the pieces after a family member was murdered, all of these individuals faced challenging situations. The lessons learned were:

- We rise and fall based on our attitude
- People respond to positive (passionate) enthusiasm
- New situations breed new perspectives
- Never quit
- A positive mindset matters

## **IMPACT OF THEIR LEADERSHIP**

Not surprisingly, given that these everyday leaders work in public service, the impact of their leadership focused mainly on improving community, living conditions, and quality of life for large numbers of people. From the judge who believes his rulings impact the day-to-day lives of citizens to the mayor who says “the little things I do for the town seem to impact the quality of lives,” these individuals are focused on a greater sphere than those that work directly for them.

## **GREAT LEADERS**

Again, great political leaders like Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Giuliani were identified along with a current supervisor, Jesus, and a female Muslim journalist. These individuals were identified because of the following characteristics:

- A forward thinker who focused on what was right
- Overcame great challenges
- Inspiring
- Not afraid to speak her truth
- Love, compassion, empathy

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## WHAT IS THE PROFILE OF A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES LEADER?

### CHALLENGES FACED DAY-TO-DAY

Professional Services is represented by doctors, an anesthesiologist, a veterinarian, an accountant, attorneys, and a marketing specialist. Common across this diverse group is that their challenges focus on client and relationship management. Dealing with multiple stakeholders, working across boundaries, advocating on behalf of patients/clients, judging conflicting ideas and directions, and keeping staff motivated in the face of trying times. Additionally, time management was mentioned frequently as a reason why meeting these challenges is difficult.

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

As has been common for most everyday leaders, the classes they attend are either in the category of professional development (focusing on technical skills related to their position) or personal development (fitness, recreation, birthing, etc.). This group, in particular, focused development on Continuing Education Credits (CEC) needed to keep their various licenses. Does leadership development meet the CEC criteria? If so, how do we position it as important to these groups?

### KEY LEADERSHIP EVENTS

For the majority of these leaders, the key events came from childhood to early adulthood and included experience of being mentoring by an aunt who worked as a nurse, being elected college sorority president, having parents who both were doctors, having a paper route. Only two people mentioned key events that occurred during their specific career. The lessons learned were:

- Earn others respect first
- Be accountable to self and never pass the blame
- Teamwork is essential to success
- Caring for others is a difficult and worthwhile pursuit
- Humility will lead to respect

### IMPACT OF THEIR LEADERSHIP

The most interesting finding from this question is the difference in perceived impact between the attorneys and the doctors. The doctors believe that their work is improving quality of lives, saving lives, and helping to create a healthier and happier society. On the flipside, the attorneys all mentioned that they did not believe their work had any impact on society at large.

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## PROFESSIONAL SERVICES LEADER (continued)

### GREAT LEADERS

In this group, political leaders were balanced by personal relationships. Political leaders that were mentioned were Martin Luther King Jr., Reagan, Clinton, and George W. Bush. These leaders share the list with a professor, a residency director, a client, a CEO, and a father. The characteristics of note were:

- Communicated in a strict but fair manner
- Courageous, wise, determined
- A self-starter who could be trusted
- Able to build morale through chaos
- Instilled confidence

## WHAT IS THE PROFILE OF A SMALL BUSINESS LEADER?

### CHALLENGES FACED DAY-TO-DAY

The common theme for this group is simply “keeping the ship afloat.” All the small business owners focused their challenges on keeping the business running efficiently and included specific challenges such as dealing with employee issues, client satisfaction, providing a vision for employees, hiring staff, and keeping employees happy.

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The classes taken by the small business owners are more diverse than any other group as they range from newborn classes to tennis lessons to a weekend retreat called Leadership Nashville. There are fewer classes in this group that are geared towards technical skill building (which might suggest that courses for small business owners are not often provided). Mentoring was the most likely avenue of future development for these leaders.

### KEY LEADERSHIP EVENTS

For the majority of these leaders, the key event in their lives had to do with building self-confidence. The stories ranged from becoming the high school quarterback to joining the Business Networks to closing their first deal. The fact that confidence was a shared quality is intriguing as it may be one of the main skills a successful small business owner needs.

### IMPACT OF THEIR LEADERSHIP

The two main areas of impact for these leaders are their employees and charitable/volunteer pursuits. In regards to their employees, these leaders believe they

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## SMALL BUSINESS LEADER (continued)

offer economic stability and are able to teach values via their close relationships. As for the charitable/volunteer pursuits, these ranged from providing money to organizations, to coaching football, to serving on the boards of various not-for-profits.

## GREAT LEADERS

In this group, the family reigned as the best examples of great leaders. From fathers, to wives, to two-year-old daughters, these leaders focused on examples that were closest to them. Included in this group would be a mentor and lifelong friend. The characteristics that were mentioned included:

- First to arrive and last to leave
- Confidence
- People are drawn to him
- Sees situations objectively and is able to make a sound decision
- Treats everyone the same

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**André Martin** a former enterprise associate with the Center for Creative Leadership, is currently the Leadership Development Director for Mars, Inc. André holds a master's degree and Ph.D. in Organizational Psychology from St. Louis University.



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