

Leadership in the Age of the Knowledge Worker.

Little more than 200 years ago a leadership revolution of epic proportions heralded the birth of a new country. America, fresh with new people, bright ideas and high hopes changed the world's expectation of leaders and leadership forever. Knowledge Workers are having a similar impact.

Back then General Washington created a level playing field by bringing in skilled outsiders who knew the enemy and what it would take to defeat them. From von Steuben to Lafayette, Washington sought individuals who could make a difference in the outcome of the war. His consultants turned a ragtag collection of farmers and shopkeepers into the officer corps that led the Americans to victory.

In today's hyper-competitive environment, business is like war! You put your job on the line to help your company beat the competition, gain market-share and be a leader. Here's what you need to look for when hiring leaders and how to improve the leaders you currently have.

Focus on these traits:

Communication skills: Must be far above average. Fuzzy writing and clumsy speaking skills are rarely indicative of sharp thinking, whereas clarity and conciseness of expression are. Colloquial expressions may work well on the factory floor but are unlikely to impress your customers or board of directors.

Leadership and change-agent skills: Reject any candidate who believes everything is fine just the way it is and wants to become a valued team player - unless you're hiring followers. You are far better to find an individual who wants to lead your team through uncharted terrain in search of a better way. "Fire in the belly" is how many of our clients describe this.

Action oriented: Leaders cannot be afraid to make tough decisions. In business, acts of omission cause more damage than acts of commission.

Leads by example: They're able to blend the intricate personalities and quirks of talented people by setting ambitious goals and motivating others to participate in achieving them. Leadership is never limited to the corner office on the top floor. In the R&D lab, it motivates lone-wolf scientists and engineers to work together to design a faster chip. In the field, it motivates the sales force to take no prisoners in the battle for marketplace supremacy.

The impact of Knowledge Workers:

Today managers must lead, workers must innovate and organizations must grow organically. Not since the birth of the industrial age have the foundations of our management practices been so challenged and the opportunities so great.

A company's critical assets are the minds of its employees. Nouvelle strategies and tactics are required to create and nurture an environment that leverages the talent of its people by engaging them in the innovative and creative pursuit of clear and common goals.

We live in a world of ideas where the employee, asked to participate in a monotonous routine, will contribute little, while the same employee engaged in creating the future will produce well beyond the expectations of management and significantly contribute to the creation of wealth.

This corporate shift from management to leadership is singularly the greatest challenge facing the modern business leader. The concept is easy to grasp; its execution, however, requires nothing less than genuine personal transformation at the top of an organization.

The unfortunate reality is that the controlling and directing skills that got these people to their position are the very skills that will limit their future success and the success of their organizations. It is for this reason that the need for personal change is difficult to admit, difficult to accomplish, absolutely essential, and incredibly rewarding when achieved.

We now know that leadership is unique to the individual, unique to the situation, and unique to the people being led. To develop effective leaders, you need to customize leadership development programs for each individual and company

If General Washington were running a New Economy company today, he'd likely have a man named **Ron Weins** at his side. Ron, who is a Principal in CALIAN's Management Consulting Practice, focuses on leadership transformation. He teaches senior leaders how to stretch beyond their limits, build trust and communicate their vision so clearly that team members willingly commit with their thoughts and energy.

I have witnessed first hand the real sustainable positive changes Ron and his team have brought to organizations across North America like: **Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Texas, Alcatel, Castek, Unisys,** and **Bank of Canada**.

Washington couldn't have achieved victory with second-rate people and neither can you. Solid hiring and leadership training of your Knowledge Workers can level the playing field and make you victorious.

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