

Return on Character

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I hope to inspire a movement where people demand character driven leadership because it delivers higher value to all stakeholders.

A leader should stay legal, but beyond that, it's the person who is hard nosed, doesn't succumb to soft HR practices and ruthlessly controls costs who creates the most value.

People demonstrate character through habitual behaviors, they can develop the habits of strong character and 'unlearn' the habits of poor character.

Good leaders build enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.

Human character encompasses much more than honesty and truthfulness. It is also about loyalty or integrity, of fairness etc.

Character is about distinguishing right from wrong, it is about not misleading others, it is about self control, it is about co-operation and forgiveness, it is about compassion.

Finding a balance wherein our behaviors promote the most good for the most people is the ongoing task of all principled people of strong character.

The ROC matrix

Head	Heart
<p>Integrity : telling the truth, acting consistently with principles, values and beliefs. Standing up for what is right, keeping promises.</p>	<p>Forgiveness: Letting go of one's mistakes, letting go of others mistakes, focusing on what's right vs. what's wrong</p>
<p>Responsibility: Owning one's personal choices, admitting mistakes and failures. Expressing a concern for the common good</p>	<p>Compassion: Empathizing with others, empowering others, commitment to others development</p>

There are virtuoso ceos and self focused ceos. Self focused ceos are weak characters who are out to help themselves, no matter what the cost to others.

Virtuoso CEOs are skilled business people, their employees see them as individuals of strong character and they select and build a team of strong character.

Self focused CEOs can't be trusted to keep promises, often pass blame to others, frequently punish well intentioned people for making mistakes, and are poor at caring for people..

The foundation of a leader's decision making rests on creating a vision for the future, maintaining a strategic focus, and creating a culture of accountability.

Character (who the leader is) +
Skills (what the leader does) =
Results (Return on Character).

Human beings are born with five personality dimensions: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness and Risk aversion or fear. Think of each of these traits as having a slider which goes from 0 to 100.

John Lennon, the famous Beatle once said “ life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans”

Good CEOs always have a connection with influential mentors.

All human beings have a well honed skill of denial, the benefit of this is that individuals are optimistic, the downside is that they get blinded and believe their own lies.

The virtuoso ceo s in our study had the ability and the discipline of seeking objective feedback all the time. Leaders who ask for the truth repeatedly are rarely in self denial.

No matter how much reflection we practice, we need to get feedback from other people in order to become truly self aware.

The fear based approach of self focused CEOs actually creates a rift and drives us apart.

When we can routinely learn to challenge our own ideas and beliefs, we achieve the highest levels of mental complexity. When we achieve that, we become a self transforming mind.

Virtuoso leaders developed strong character habits and adopted positive beliefs about human nature, organizational life and their own sense of purpose.

Good leaders create a vision or a plan , they set the strategic focus and key initiatives to achieve them, they build a talented team and enforce a culture of accountability.

Poor leaders :

1. Make a decision and seek confirming data
2. allow short termism to override long term decisions
3. Make impulsive decisions
4. Place undue importance on decision and its impact on their career
5. Get unduly influenced by the last person they speak to
6. Rely on their gut rather than collect careful analysis

Virtuoso CEOs achieve high ratings in their ability to form and communicate vision and strategy or direction.

Good CEOs create and maintain a culture of accountability and draw the boundaries of acceptable behavior.

A leader's ability to consistently communicate has a bearing on how the organization sees his/her credibility and character.

Leaders with strong character are more likely to be anchored in the kind of disciplined decision making processes that result in clearer organizational vision and a stronger culture of accountability.

The most effective teams share the following: Goals, Roles, Processes, Informal Interactions

The people led by a virtuoso CEO
have more authority and
empowerment to make a
difference.

People are fully engaged when they believe that management respects them.

Another workforce engagement killer is unfair hiring, unfair promotion and compensation policies.

A workforce that believes that sycophancy is the best route will never be engaged with company purpose or goals.

Three keystone leadership behavior traits include :keeping promises, following through on commitments, owning up to mistakes, forgiving people for mistakes, treating people as people.

A workforce that feels cared for is more productive than one that is neglected in terms of development, listening etc.

Changing your character is hard work. It takes a lot of energy and personal resolve. Willpower alone cannot do it.

Your brain views change as a threat, because your brain thrives on routine.

Leading and guiding an organization through a change process when the future is uncertain needs virtuoso leadership from the leader and the executive team.

Boards are key to keeping people focused on what matters : vision, strategy, financial performance and people matters.

Few leaders understand the shared nature of their voyage, they must realize that their safe passage depends on the safe passage of every member of their team.