

# THE NATURAL?

Leadership skills can be learned, just like anything else

By Jay Perry

In my best-selling book, "Success Manifesto," co-authored with Brian Tracy, I start by looking at what I consider a great leadership myth, the concept that there are born leaders.

I posit that there is no such thing. One of the strongest reasons that this is fact is because we learn over 75 percent of what we know through what is called "modelling". Modelling is actually mimicry of what someone else does. We observe it then we try to duplicate it.

It is plain to those that study these kinds of things

In my last article I established that there are "un-coachable" people and advised you to take an inventory of staff to ensure you do not have any onboard. During that inventory you probably tripped over some very likely candidates that hold potential to become leaders. You can start with them. You have to take them under your wing and nurture them along the path. They probably won't find it independently.

Another thing I advise is to use assessment tools that can screen people in both inward and outward

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for a living that when we see what appears to be a "natural" at anything, it is very likely that there has been an opportunity for modelling to have imprinted on the person.

That does not mean there is no room for a talent or a propensity or an aptitude toward a certain skill. There is. Witness my golf game. It isn't bad but I do not possess the natural, fluid movements of a Tiger, Rory or Ricky. I have, however, over time and plenty of practice (and money spent on lessons) been able to develop into a decent golfer.

I believe leadership skills are in the same category. There are people that have a propensity to engage the right skills almost effortlessly, thus they appear to be a "natural." That ability is a plus but the point is that those of us without it are not limited because we do not possess it. We can learn the skill set necessary to become very proficient if we apply ourselves properly.

That application of one's self usually involves modelling, for what is mentoring if it does not involve observations of behaviours? Mentoring includes, of course, counselling and teaching as well, but modelling is extremely important. Otherwise, it can easily slide into being a case of "do as I say, not as I do."

ways. What I mean is that a good assessment tool will be able to tell you who holds potential and disposition for moving up into a leadership role as well as the identification of those that should not be onboard your ship.

I use one of these assessment tools that is very sophisticated and just concluded a report for a client where the assessment was exercised on 10 of the existing staff. The results were a clarification for him, showing which of the 10 were appropriate to invest in leadership training for, and which were to be ruled out as their aptitude was less than what was needed for his organization.

In today's business environment it makes more sense than ever to look for the diamonds in your backyard before you go looking elsewhere for the people you need to help you and your business grow. It is another of the ways that you can be the one who's driving.



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