

Are You Fitting Employee Personality Into Your Leadership Puzzle?

Which personality type is best suited for leadership – the extroverted or the introverted? It's a question that surfaces every now and then in discussions on leadership, often with the consensus that while an extrovert would appear to have an easier time leading others, introverts also have unique attributes which prove to be of benefit to those in leadership positions. Now, thanks to [a recent study by Adam Grant, Francesca Gino and David Hofmann](#), we have tangible evidence that there are situations and team make-ups where an introverted person would perform far better than an extrovert in the leadership role.

For most leadership thinkers, this study serves to provide empirical proof for what we already surmised – that extrovert and introvert personality types both offer unique advantages that serve to benefit those who lead others, along with distinct limitations that can make this position a challenge at times for them to do effectively. This study also serves to reinforce a concept that has been a running theme on my blog – that business is indeed personal because people are involved.

Of course, if we're recognizing that a leader's personality has an impact on their effectiveness in managing their team, it's only reasonable that we consider the role personality plays on the other side of the workplace equation. Specifically, that we recognize how the myriad of personalities found within the workforce also plays a role in one's ability to successfully lead the team in reaching the goals of the organization.

Just as the researchers demonstrated in their study regarding introverted and extroverted leaders, there are particular situations and group make-ups where certain personality types can help leaders better manage the collective efforts of their teams.

Naturally, such thinking is likely to be dismissed by those who believe the best way to manage team performance is by advising employees to check their idiosyncrasies at the door, in order to maintain the organization's veneer of modern-day professionalism. But as the following three scenarios illustrate, the willingness to employ the diverse personalities found within your team is a key piece in the leadership puzzle of how to best direct your organization toward reaching its shared goal.

1. Employees who can help you lead the charge on change Let's face it – whether it's an initiative that will make your company the top in your field or a new measure that will make internal

processes more streamlined and your team more effective, people are wary of change, mainly because they don't know where that change will take them. So getting everyone on board with your latest project can be difficult, that is unless you seek out those employees who thrive on challenges.

These employees are fairly easy to identify – they're the ones who come into your office not simply to point out problems, but to offer ideas on how to improve things or how to solve a glitch in the organizational system. These are the types who embrace change as an opportunity to learn and explore, to grow and develop. And they're also the ones who can be your greatest ally and support for helping to encourage others in your organization to follow your lead and taking a chance on this latest endeavour, thanks to their enthusiasm, optimism and willingness to strike out into new territory.

2. Employees who can help others weather the storm Whether your organization is still riding through rough waters or has finally broken through to calmer seas, it's clear that overall employee morale is at one of its lowest points. After enduring through a global economic recession that's seen massive job losses and employees being forced to take on greater and greater workloads, there's no question that things can look rather bleak in most workplaces today. While it helps to have a leadership that is willing to recognize the reality of what their employees face when they walk through the office door, what's equally valuable is encouraging a workplace dynamic where empathy and positive emotional solidarity is fostered among the various members in your team.

Granted, not everyone is capable of expressing empathy to the same degree, which is why leaders should seek out employees who naturally demonstrate higher levels of empathy and provide support for their willingness to offer a sympathetic ear to their colleagues. While it might not lessen the burden or feelings of being overwhelmed, demonstrating that you value the ability of certain employees to create a more supportive environment will help your team feel like they're facing these challenges together. Such a sentiment will certainly go a long way to ensuring your employees stick around when things improve as they'll remember what work was like when times were tough, and how their organization's leadership worked with their employees to help foster a feeling of solidarity by looking out for one another.

3. Employees who get what it's all about There's no question that today's world is more competitive and connected than it has ever been. While this has led to many new opportunities for collaboration and growth, it has also introduced its share of challenges for leaders to try and keep up with a constantly changing and evolving marketplace and community. This can cause leaders

to lose perspective of the bigger picture and why many businesses have lost out on new opportunities simply because their leaders could not see the connection between these new offerings and their organization's vision.

This is where leaders can benefit from taking a lesson from those employees who understand what it's all about. These are the employees who celebrate the organization's successes as if they were their own, because they appreciate their role in that accomplishment. They're the ones who bond with the other employees, sharing a laugh with them and offering help when they can. They're also the types who proudly display photos of their family and children as they understand the importance of honoring their commitments to their family as they do for their organization.

At the end of the day, what we all strive for is not simply to become the biggest or the most popular brand in our field. Instead, what all of us are driven by is a desire to know that we're making a difference; that what we do matters, both for our organization and for the community we work within.

Perhaps this is the most important lesson we can learn from this study by Grant et al.; that contrary to popular thought, personalities do indeed play a role in business and in fact are good for business as it's through our personalities that we can find a sense of commonality with others. And it's through fostering that commonality that leaders can best succeed in leading their teams toward reaching their organization's shared goals.

So how can we recognize employee personality as an asset for our organizations? What other instances are there where these distinct traits offer a tangible benefit for leaders and their organizations?