

Think about your Leadership skills:

The most important skill to develop in your pursuit of a successful business career is one that is related to leadership. If you are looking to make the transition from senior management to director level or even taking on your very first line management role, then leadership in its raw form is where it's at.

What is leadership? Leadership is really an influence process, based on a combination of Vision and Persuasion. You need to have a clear vision of what you want to achieve and how to achieve it, and then you need to set the direction you want to go in and persuade other people to go with you. Simple? Well, you also need to have the right set of circumstances to allow your leadership to flourish. Situations involving change, disruption, ones involving crisis or limited resources or ones developing new ideas and launching new initiatives, for example, are all breeding grounds for individuals to seize leadership opportunities and grow their capabilities. So, of course you need to consider your visionary and influence skills, but also have a think about your own business circumstances and look for opportunities to step into leadership roles.

Are leaders born or made? Many moons ago, supporters of Trait theory believed that leaders could be identified and preselected based on physical characteristics, social background or moral views - in other words, people, who looked, talked and acted the part. The reality is that nowadays everyone in their own organisation is a potential leader, though not necessarily permanently. When you propose an idea or offer your services to do something you are taking the lead, if only briefly. Informal leadership like this is based on behaviour rather than on a formal assigned role, and better organisations look to cultivate this.

Certainly, it always seemed easier to persuade those people who reported to you and as such depended on you for salary appraisals and bonuses. It was always a touch harder to persuade and influence when you move from line management into staff roles where you are trying to make change happen across functions, with peers, fellow directors or even with clients when operating in consultancy roles.

Aside from circumstance and the leader's own ability to set the vision and persuade, the final factor that completes the leadership triangle relates to followers or supporters. It is said that good followers make a leader great, and nowadays the emphasis is increasingly on the leader themselves to operate as a 'Servant leader' and create the environment and situation where their teams can rapidly flourish and perform at the highest possible levels. Whether you are leading a team of 2 or 200 if you try to adopt this change in leadership philosophy it will pay dividends over the longer term and you will help shape the organisation in a positive way.

So, if you are wondering why you are struggling to make the next upwards move in the organisation, it is probably time to think about your essential leadership skills.

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