



Level 5 Leadership

James Kumar Pallivathukkal^{1*} and Telma Rani George²

¹Specialist in Internal Medicine, Aster Hospital, Sultanate of Oman

²Specialist Prosthodontist, Sultanate of Oman

***Corresponding Author:** James Kumar Pallivathukkal, Specialist in Internal Medicine, Aster Hospital, Sultanate of Oman.

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Abstract

‘The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things’- Ronald Regan.

The concept of level 5 leadership was introduced by business consultant Jim Collins in 2001. It was first mentioned in his book “Good to Great”. These leaders are described as a ‘powerful mixture of personal humility and indomitable will’. They are ambitious, and work for the success of their team and organization, rather than for personal achievements. While they are the first to accept blame for mistakes, they take no regrets in sharing credits for success. It is noticeable that all successful companies had Level 5 leadership at the time of transition, who have motivated the enterprise with inspired standards.

Keywords: Humility; Leadership

Level 1- Highly capable individual

It is the entry level of leadership and requires less effort. While it is not possible to rely on a leadership position alone to have people to follow you, yet it is a prime position to begin investing in your potential and growth as a leader. The leaders at this level should use his talent, knowledge and skills to achieve high quality works and thus makes productive contribution to the organization.

Level 2- Contributing team member

This level is based on the relationship developed that encourages people to follow the leader or as Maxwell says, give permission to the leader to guide them. They contribute their capabilities for the achievement and objectives of the organization. The leaders work effectively and productively and hence connect with the people, treating them as individuals and gaining their trust. Trust in turn leads to respect and the result is a positive work environment.

Level 3 – Competent manager

Level 3 leaders are competent managers who are able to objectively organize their group. The influence and credibility of the leaders motivate the people to make effective use of the resources and produce better results at work. As the work improves, so do the morale. With the rise of profits and goals, the team moves forwards and rises effectively to another level.

Level 4 – Effective leader

To achieve the objective the leader galvanizes the departments of the organization. They invest in the people and tap their potential leadership skills, and hence they tend to reproduce themselves. A compelling vision and commitment help them to stimulate higher performance standard. This effort helps the people to grow. Growth at the people department level helps the leaders themselves to grow.

Level 5 - Executive

This is the highest level of leadership. The level 5 leader possess all the qualities of other levels at the same time possess the personal humility and professional will to continuously focus on personal growth as well as the growth and development of others. They create opportunities and have a positive reputation among people that makes them a Pinnacle leader.

The qualities of a level 5 leader

Humility

One of the major quality level 5 leaders possess is humility. Simon Sinek said humility is being open to the ideas of others and should not be confused with meekness. This characteristic of the leader will have a positive impact on employee well-being. They will have the ability to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. They are willing to accept new propositions, realizations, and demeanor. They welcome the approach of an objective perceptive of the context as well as admit inclusion of themselves into it.

Zhong, *et al.* [1] studied the relation between humility in leaders and the employee well-being and found an increase in work engagement and job satisfaction and a decrease in emotional exhaustion. They stated that leader humility subsequently increased the level of employee humility. James Collins says level 5 leaders are differentiated from other leaders as they possess a blend of personal humility combined with extraordinary professional will.

Professional will

This creates a clear standard of a transition from good to greatness, producing long-term results and not settling for anything less. In achieving unwavering professional will, a leader should focus on the following qualities.

- **Understanding strength and weakness:** A leader should have a deep and personal understanding of their strengths and weakness. A leader can gradually attain qualities that improve their strength, some of which are good communication skills, effective delegating of tasks, ambition to strive for perfection and emotional intelligence. At the same time the leader should implement a growth plan and identify and improve in areas needed. By learning from others to further improve your skills, one can convert weakness into strength.

- **Organizational development:** A leader should focus on the purpose and work to develop the organization. They play a critical role in the culture of the organization. They should be passionate about their projects, and this will encourage enthusiasm among employees.
- **Continuous learning:** All great leaders need to be lifelong learners. A key aspect of continuous learning is researching, practicing, and sharing information to reinforce it. New skills need to be acquired and shared. This can inspire a change in the workplace and create a culture of learning among the employees.
- **Determination to do the right:** Initiative, persistence, dominance, and drive should be the key factors of a leadership traits. A determined leader will not discourage or defeat to disrupt the course of action.

Level 5 leadership in today's workplace

In the 1980s and 1990s, it was expected that charisma was the key asset in leadership. Charismatic leaders had the ability to sway the people and convince them. In today's competitive workplace, the importance of effective organizational relationships and the ability to lead the employees have become important. Transformational leadership have proved to have ethical standards where they treat individuals with a commitment to their welfare, growth, and wholeness [2].

Caldwell, *et al.* [3] states that Leaders that establish relationships with employees based upon the shared pursuit of a moral purpose achieve greater results than leaders who do not create this personal connection. Owens and Hekman [4] described the model of humble leadership behavior and the factors that moderate the effectiveness of these behaviors. These leaders are a model to their followers who are encouraged in their own developmental journey and thus grow and produce a positive organizational outcome.

Practicing level 5 leadership at the workplace has proved to reap better results for the organization. Inspiration and guidance from the leaders have fostered an effective work environment, team performance and permits innovation within the organization. Earnest and Young did a survey on strategies most essential for the success of a CEO and concluded the most important being 'getting a retaining talent'. A leader should be able to identify, train and retain

the talent of the employees. Other factors concluded in the study to have contribution in the successful performance of a CEO being:

- Execute business plan well.
- Focus of serving customers better
- Form alliances and partnerships
- Empower people through shared vision.

Indian businessman and Industrialist J.R.D Tata was known for his humility and quality to motivate people. His leadership is imperative for molding his employees and shaping them into a force that serves a competitive business advantage for the company [5]. Tata believes continuous learning and listening is the key to success. He had stated, “to be a great leader, you have to lead human beings with affection”. His vision was to create future leaders who would perpetuate the Tata values such as integrity, excellence, unity, and responsibility [6].

Tata leadership is an amalgamation of personal values and national cultural ethos. It is recognized at both individual behavioral level and organizational strategic level and was termed humanistic leadership [7]. Tata group’s leadership have been always pivotal in the success of the group. They were the first company that introduced the 8-hour working rule in 1912 and provided medical health benefits to their employees as far back as 1917.

People before strategy

Colin Powell, ex US diplomat said ‘leadership is all about people. It is about people motivating people to get the job done’. Person centered leadership is based on get-your -hands-dirty method, that invests in human feelings, intelligence and rationality. Sharing a few good laughs and considerations to other personal well beings of the employees can have a rational influence on the success of the organization. The relationship between the employee and the employer has been shifting for some time. Organizations have a challenge of reshaping the social contract with the employees and tailor a better work experience. A level 5 leadership can address these challenges by:

- Listening to young professionals and encouraging them to participate in decision making.
- Make choices and preferences based on employee value propositions.

- Tracking external trends and on this basis attract and retain new talents.
- Influence and encourage organizations to refresh their social contracts with the employees.

Cardiff, *et al.* [8] in a study on the manifestation of person-centered leadership in clinical nursing concluded that it is a contextualized approach that enables leaders to achieve self-actualization, empowerment, and well-being.

Leaders of the Future

Leaders of the future should be agile and capable of crisis management. Their success depends on contingent workforce expansion and talent sharing. In the era of artificial intelligence, machine learning and other leveraging technologies, digitalization is progressing at an incredible rate. However, an organization cannot digitalize merely by upgrading its tools and technologies but has a key role in employee adaptation.

Leaders should effectively communicate, recognize interpersonal skills and encourage teamwork, and decisively solve problems. They should have enhanced cognitive ability and willingly accept changes. They should think strategically in all complex situations. Emotional intelligence is a key factor in successful leadership, as no leader can thrive without social awareness and empathy [9,10].

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