

Are You a Strategic Leader?

What is a strategic leader? Aren't all leaders strategic? Isn't being strategic a prerequisite for being identified as a leader?

I have coached hundreds of leaders; those who have been terminated (right-sized, downsized or fired) and those who are seeking to enhance their leadership prowess. After working with this large volume of executive clients, I am able to fairly easily identify those leaders who have a true strategic innate component as part of their leadership make-up and those that have acquired a certain skill level and those who talk about strategy – but don't a clue as to how to be a strategic leader.

What are the differences?

Those leaders who have a true strategic approach and purpose see the complexity and the simplicity in all problems, opportunities, challenges and threats. They see all the various disparate “dots” and they can connect them. They see the big picture and they are able to see and act on the interrelationships between fundamentally opposing divergent elements.

The other two groups of leaders – those who have acquired skills in asking the questions, reading the indicators and observing trends and those who talk about strategy but are mired in tactics – can learn the tenets of strategy, but they never acquire the level of omniscience and foreknowledge that true strategic leaders naturally exhibit.

Another observation about strategic leaders – they also get fired!

Their strategic leadership talent does not make them immune from the vagaries of corporate reality. For any number of reasons, they often find themselves in an unwanted transition.

Through numerous conversations with them, I find that they all saw it coming 18 months to two years before the actual event. Some tried to turn the tide; others saw the inevitability and took steps to begin to identify their next opportunities. Most often, they were fired because they were the heralds of troubled times to come or they opposed popular decisions that they knew would not benefit the corporation.

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