

# Are You An Adaptive Leader?

By Drs. Travis Bradberry & Jean Greaves

One of the most popular *Dilbert* comic strips in the cartoon's history begins with Dilbert's boss relaying senior leadership's explanation for the company's low profits. In response to his boss, Dilbert asks incredulously, "So they're saying that profits went up because of great leadership and down because of a weak economy?" To which Dilbert's boss replies, "These meetings will go faster if you stop putting things in context."

Great leadership is indeed a difficult thing to pin down and understand. You know a great leader when you're working for one, but even great leaders can have a hard time explaining the specifics of what they do that makes their leadership so effective. Great leadership is dynamic; it melds unique skills into an integrated whole.

The discoveries in our new book, *Leadership 2.0*, are the product of an intensive study that set out to separate the leadership skills that get results from those that are inconsequential or harmful. The first thing our study accomplished was pinpointing the 22 leadership skills critical to performance. Next, we looked closer at each skill and discovered that they all fall into one of two categories: the skills that get people into leadership positions in the first place and the skills that the greatest leaders use to rise above the rest. The first set of skills we deemed core leadership because together they form the basis of solid, productive leadership. The latter set of skills is called adaptive leadership because these skills create dynamic, agile leaders who are incredibly effective in any environment.

*Leadership 2.0* presents a new way to understand great leadership and an innovative method for any leader to become great. Core leadership will tighten your leadership

game and make certain you have the building blocks in place to become an adaptive leader. The adaptive leadership skills will enable you to see and understand the specific actions the world's greatest leaders take every day. These things are not innate qualities of brilliant and inspirational people that you should aspire to—they are practical, repeatable skills that any leader can adopt with effort. The book breaks down the core and adaptive leadership skills into straightforward components supported by concrete strategies so that you can apply them without unnecessary burden on your busy schedule.

## CORE LEADERSHIP

STRATEGY	ACTION	RESULTS
Vision Acumen Planning Courage to Lead	Decision Making Communication Mobilizing Others	Risk Taking Results Focus Agility

## ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE	CHARACTER	DEVELOPMENT
Self-Awareness Self-Management Social Awareness Relationship Management	Decision Fairness Information Sharing Outcome Concern	Integrity Credibility Values Differences	Lifelong Learning Developing Others

## Core Leadership

Core leadership skills are the skills that get people promoted into leadership positions. People who naturally demonstrate these skills are often labeled "born" leaders. Core leadership skills are the foundation of effective leadership—they won't make you a great leader on their own, but you can't do it without them. Experienced leaders will recognize the core leadership skills as a great opportunity to sharpen the saw and take a new look at the skills they use every day. Aspiring leaders can learn the core leadership skills to mold their own blade.



# Are You An Adaptive Leader?

## CORE LEADERSHIP IS ...

### **STRATEGY**

Talent hits a target that no one else can hit, but genius hits a target no one else can see. Strategy is knowing how to look ahead, spot the trends, and anticipate the course of action you will follow to maximize your success.

### **ACTION**

An idea is a curious thing—it will not work unless you do. For most leaders, desire is not the factor that holds them back; it's knowing how to execute.

### **RESULTS**

It's a myth that hard work is enough to achieve results. Far too often obstacles are thrown in a leader's path that require a special set of skills to reach the finish line.

## Adaptive Leadership

The adaptive leadership skills represent the major discovery from our research. That's not to suggest we "discovered" these skills. Rather, we found that adaptive leadership skills are what set great leaders apart—these skills represent the otherwise intangible qualities that great leaders have in common. Adaptive leadership is a unique combination of skills, perspective, and guided effort that enable true excellence. The adaptive leadership skills can take a leader at any level to places others cannot go. You just need a process to follow, and that's what *Leadership 2.0* is all about.

## ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP IS ...

### **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Emotional intelligence is a set of skills that capture our

awareness of our own emotions and the emotions of others and how we use this awareness to manage ourselves effectively and form quality relationships.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE**

Great leaders don't shy away from the truth. They know how to integrate what people think, what they want to hear, and how they want to hear it with the facts. This makes people feel respected and valued.

### **CHARACTER**

Leaders who embody a true sense of character are transparent and forthcoming. They aren't perfect, but they earn people's respect by walking their talk.

### **DEVELOPMENT**

The moment leaders think they have nothing more to learn and have no obligation to help develop those they lead is the moment they ensure they'll never know their true potential.

In addition to separating great leaders from the rest of the pack, adaptive leadership skills are what leaders overestimate their abilities in the most. We had leaders from a large cross section of industries rate themselves in all 22 core and adaptive leadership skills. We also had the leaders' peers, boss(es), and direct reports answer the same questions about them, and we compared the scores. As the table that follows illustrates, the five skills in which leaders overestimate their abilities the most are all adaptive leadership skills.

# Are You An Adaptive Leader?

Top 5 Gaps\* In Leaders' Awareness As Rated By:



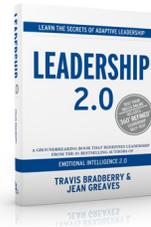
\* Leaders rated themselves higher than others did.

Contrary to what Dilbert might have us believe, leaders' gaps in self-awareness are rarely due to deceitful, Machiavellian motives or severe character deficits. In most cases, leaders—like everyone else—view themselves in a more favorable light than other people do. The fact that leaders' greatest overestimations are limited to the adaptive leadership skills shows how tough these skills are to master and how few leaders have honed their skills adequately. As rare as adaptive leadership skills are, they present a perfect opportunity for leaders to get an edge and take their game to the next level.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

*Travis Bradberry, Ph.D. & Jean Greaves, Ph.D.*

Drs. Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves are the award-winning authors of the #1 bestselling book *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* and the cofounders of TalentSmart, a consultancy that serves more than 75% of Fortune 500 companies and is the world's leading provider of emotional intelligence tests and training. Their bestselling books have been translated into 28 languages, and are sold in more than 150 countries. Drs. Bradberry and Greaves have written for, or been covered by, *Newsweek*, *BusinessWeek*, *Fortune*, *Forbes*, *Fast Company*, *Inc.* *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Harvard Business Review*.



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