THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE
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Have you noticed a recent surge in articles, books and other publications discussing the topic of leadership? Each author claims to have the insider scoop on what specifically constitutes a great leader in today's business. So which personal attributes truly identify solid leaders? Is it the individual's communication style? Their overall drive or tenacity? Their personality amongst colleagues? Their intellectual capacity? Their years in management?

Looking back over the decades, leadership gurus such as Drucker, Maxwell, Blanchard, and Goleman, classify leadership in terms of the individual's approach to situations encountered. Bill George, retired CEO of Medtronic, stresses the importance of interacting authentically, and wrote a bestselling book entitled *Authentic Leadership*. This year, the head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, provided his top 12 leadership secrets in a book entitled *Leading With Humility*. Finally, just this week, the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* featured an article highlighting 3M's Global Talent Leader and their organizational approach to developing talent and expanding leadership internationally.

Within my own consulting business, I've recognized many leaders across all sectors, large or small, public or private, manufacturing or service, struggle with very similar issues. These skill deficits surround areas such as time management, conflict resolution, strategic planning, holding others accountable, etc. The oddity of all this is that these particular issues trouble even the most seasoned, well-intentioned leader, with decades of supervisory experience. When providing coaching, it became evident these leaders privately contained their struggle and, through the years, withheld any energy to proactively address the problem. In most cases, the leader actually believed these issues went unnoticed.

One of the number one issues keeping CEOs awake at night is the lack of effective leadership in their business. Whether it's their #2 in their firm or an entry level supervisor, business owners suggest that 80% of their business issues can be directly attributed to poor leadership decisions. In a recent Deloitte study (2013), 86% of executives identify leadership development as their most important and urgent concern.

My business partner and I have been discussing these concerns and believe we have a viable solution to these challenges. Our solution resides in the form of a specialized, leadership development program, the Leadership Academy. Our academy, comprised of 24 customized training workshops, is built upon what we've coined "The 12 Essential Leadership Skills: Communication, Vision, Influence, Team Building, Ethics & Values, Strategic Decision Making, Conflict Resolution, Focus, Strategic Alignment, Change Management, Learning Agility and Business Acumen." It is through these company-specific workshops where individuals gain access to these core skills and ultimately change individual behaviors.

In our next newsletter, I will further describe these 12 Essential Leadership Skills, along with our customized training solution in addressing today's overall leadership challenge.