Chapter 10
An Assessment of Leadership Traits and the Success of Six Sigma Projects

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, more effective green belt leaders rated themselves higher than less effective green belt leaders on the following traits: articulate, perceptive, self-confident, self-assured, and determined. In addition, the more effective green belt leaders reported stronger upper management support than did less effective green belt leaders. In this chapter, more effective black belt leaders rated themselves higher than less effective black belt leaders on the following traits: articulate, perceptive, self-confident, self-assured, determined, dependable, and friendly. The more effective black belt leaders also reported stronger upper management support and project experience than did less effective black belt leaders. Clearly, in times of economic uncertainty and increasing global competitiveness, managers need to be able to recognize the individuals who possess the needed traits to make their companies profitable.

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INTRODUCTION

Fuqua and Newman (2005) argue that systems theory is the most appropriate approach in the twenty-first century for achieving effective leadership in an organization. Systems theory defines leadership more broadly than the traditional bureaucratic models of leadership; it focuses on all members as leaders, rather than just one leader and a great many followers. The benefits of implementing systems theory are flexibility in leadership roles; increase sense of continuity within an organization over time; power and authority as relates to function and responsibility (those with specific expertise in a given area and who bear responsibility for outcomes in that area would be vested with power and authority over that arena of organizational functioning). Chemers (2000) defined effective leadership as “a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task.” First he argued that the leader must be perceived as competent and trustworthy by her/his followers. Next, leaders must coach, guide, and support their followers in a way that allows followers to contribute to group goal attainment while satisfying their own personal needs and goals. Finally, effective leaders must use the skills and abilities possessed by themselves and their followers to accomplish the group’s mission. Hedricks and Weinstein (1999), in their analysis of a personality profile of a corporate leader, found effective leadership to interrelate with the following four competency areas: Influencing and Directing; Building Relationships; Problem Solving and Decision Making; and Personal Organization and Time Management. With respect to Influencing and Directing, leaders possessed the motivation to assertively and persuasively present their ideas, to successfully complete projects. In the competency area of Building Relationships, leaders placed less emphasis on developing interpersonal relationships for the purpose of socializing, and leaders did not have a high need to be liked. Leaders excelled in the area of Problem Solving and Decision Making because of their above average risk-taking and sense of urgency. Finally, with respect to Personal Organization and Time Management, leaders appear to be focused on implementing their highly innovative ideas in such a way as to ensure their timely completion of projects.

Kilburg (2007) focused on reverence and temperance as the foundation of effective leadership. Ancient Chinese and Greek models of effective leadership were based on the assumption that individuals in these positions must first seek and practice virtuous behavior. Only when they were thought to have reasonably demonstrated that they understood and could consistently enact behavior that was reverent, temperate, courageous, just, and wise would such individuals be proposed for senior positions in state government.
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