

## Do You Have the Maturity to Lead?



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Intelligent leaders often are able to surmount difficult problems and challenges. While intelligence enables leaders to get things done, they also need to have this important quality to lead more effectively: maturity.

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According to Theo Veldsman, Professor and Head of the Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management, University of Johannesburg (South Africa), leadership maturity is a leader's ability to engage consistently with him or herself, others and the world by being:

- Relevant: maturity demands the ability to render wise judgments about what is appropriate in different settings.
- Productive: constructive contributions are made, and something meaningful and value adding emerges.
- Uplifting: interactions are positive, fulfilling and enriching.

The professor says acquiring leadership maturity is a lifelong journey that comprises successive stages. In each stage, leaders will develop a corresponding identity. "Depending on how they process life events and experiences, they may spiral upwards to greater maturity or downwards to lesser maturity. Or, they may get stuck for the rest of their life at one level," he explains.

Here are the five stages or thresholds in the process of maturation:

### **Stage 1: Confident Ability**

In this stage a prospective leader develops a positive, healthy self-image and self-confidence, along with a firm belief in a basic "I can" competence. He explores and discovers what his abilities are and how to apply them; he also builds the courage to take risks confidently. At the end of this stage the leader has an "identity of self-worth". But if a person gets stuck at this stage, he will have the baggage of seeking constant approval from others because his self-worth has not been affirmed.

### **Stage 2: Egocentric Satisfaction**

Here the prospective leader gains the insight that she is embedded in relations with others and the world. She realises that she must fend for herself, but that she needs others to satisfy her interests and needs. Because she is driving her own agenda, the prospective leader questions all rules and authority that may prevent her from achieving her ends. At the end of this stage the leader has an "identity of consumption". A leader stuck at this stage will have the baggage of always single-mindedly striving to satisfy her personal needs and interests, regardless of costs and circumstances.

### **Stage 3: Personal Differentiation**

Here the leader realises that, to get anywhere, he must stand out in his interactions with others and the world. He seeks to find his own voice and to distinguish himself as unique, with invaluable, rare talents and abilities. Everyone and everything is measured against his set of personalised standards. At the end of this stage the leader has an "identity of uniqueness". The leader stuck at this stage will have baggage of proclaiming ad nauseam that he is the indispensable saviour of the world.

### **Stage 4: Communality**

Here the leader realises that she cannot make her unique contribution without the help of others. She realises she must move from placing "me" at the centre of everything, to placing "us" centrally. It is about the pursuit of a shared future for herself and others. At the end of this stage the leader has an "identity of envisioning". The leader stuck here would carry the baggage of pushing for the parochial realisation of organisation-specific dreams, while ignoring the bigger context and dreams of other organisations, communities and greater society.

### **Stage 5: A Higher Calling**

In this stage the leader moves beyond shared but narrow, organisation-specific objectives to higher purposes and meanings. He searches for what lies behind shared objectives, dreams and legacies. It is about timeless, multifaceted, meaningful answers instead of one-dimensional,

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time-restricted, pragmatic solutions. Posing the right questions comes first, followed by finding the right answers. At the end of this stage the leader has an “identity of meaningfulness”. This is the highest form of leadership authenticity and maturity.

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