

## Great Leaders Adapt Boldly

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Recently in an airport, I picked up a book, [“The CEO Next Door: The 4 Behaviors that Transform Ordinary People into World-Class Leaders.”](#) In the book, they studied over 2,600 leaders and the traits that made them successful, and how to shape our leadership skills to get the most out of our teams. Many of the results are surprising and not what most of us would expect.

We see our top leaders as the smartest people in the room – the ones with all the answers. After all, isn't that why they were promoted to the top? In reality, this is not the case in most successful companies. One of the key elements reviewed in the book is “The Ability to Adapt Boldly.” When I read this, I was knocked back a step or two. I had always thought it was my job to adapt to our CEO and senior leaders, not their job to adapt to us or adapt boldly. In fact, according to their studies, leaders who could adapt boldly were seven times more likely to succeed! So, what does it mean to adapt boldly, and how do we apply this to our own leadership skills?

The first step is to let go of the past. While past successes may have gotten you into the job, future success depends on your team's success. A leader's knowledge is valuable, but it is unrealistic to believe they are the expert on every topic. Great leaders ask questions, solicit input and weigh the options. In order to do so, leaders must step back and engage their team, and gain an understanding from other perspectives before making the call.

It's all about perspective and having the skills to hear and see issues, challenges and opportunities differently. The most successful leaders train in several ways, many of which have nothing to do with work, but everything to do with perspective and adaptability.

1. They seek out novelty. Many leaders place themselves in an unfamiliar environment. Perhaps travel to a foreign country where you don't speak the language. It forces you to let go of assumptions, see things through others' eyes and adapt.
2. They weigh jobs by their learning potential as much as by their pay grade. Great leaders understand they do not know everything, but actively pursue knowledge. Perhaps, earlier in their career, they made a lateral move to improve their knowledge or took a course out of their background or expertise. Great leaders are hungry for knowledge and always want to improve.
3. They acquire new skills. In the study, one-third of the CEOs classified themselves as introverted and initially hated public speaking, but worked to develop their social and public speaking skills. Great leaders do not stay in their comfort zone – they force themselves out and build upon their weaknesses.

As we move into 2019, challenge yourself to adapt to bring the best knowledge out of or into your organization? Here are a few tips:

- Build diverse information networks. The best leaders are plugged into networks with other leaders, like in the TEGG Network, and seek out market changes. Seek out additional local professional organizations and stay ahead of what is happening and what's next in the industry as well as in your local market.
- Use the power of questions. The best leaders don't think they have the best answers. Instead, they consider themselves the ones with the best questions. So, when the going gets tough, open your reporter's notebook and start asking questions!
- Tackle premortems before postmortems. For example, next time your team is together, ask them what they'd do differently if they could take the organization back 10 years. This should be easy since hindsight is 20/20. Next, ask them to look forward 10 years, then ask what that team can do differently than you are doing right now.

Anyone who thinks leading a company, a division, a team is easy has never done it. Still, it is incredibly rewarding to build that team and take an organization to greatness. As you plan for 2019, step out of your comfort zone and ask questions, and attempt to see different perspectives. In doing so, you will engage your teams at a higher level and empower them to reach new heights.

