



## IN THIS EDITION

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## EDITORIAL

We've evolved over the past 15 years and this is aptly reflected in our new website launched just over a month ago. Our growth is attributable to the enduring trust of our clients which motivates us to step up our efforts to constantly offer them innovative solutions so that they can always aspire to be the best, and I thank them wholeheartedly for that.

THE SSA SOLUTION's new positioning is epitomized by **EMPOWERING THE TEAM**. Why? Because we work closely with your resources and that our primary objective is to facilitate change management by enhancing the strength of your teams. This is THE SSA SOLUTION mission and my entire team carries it out for the greater success of our clients.

So today I'm providing you with our third e-newsletter to tell you about various instructive issues that are at the forefront of the business agenda.

I wish you a pleasant read and invite you to come and see us!

Happy reading!

Isabelle Côté, President and CEO

## LEADERSHIP IN PERIL

In January 2009, Apple CEO Steve Jobs announced that he would be taking six months' sick leave. Almost immediately, share prices plunged nearly 10 points. How can a company such as Apple rest almost entirely on the shoulders of a single person? Weren't there other leaders at Apple who could have reassured investors? Now there's a fine, though extreme, example that demonstrates the importance of corporate leadership and highlights the current leadership crisis we now face, while we're going through a time where it is critical to excel and know how to motivate our troops! Is it a generational or social factor or the effects of enterprise culture? Although this isn't a sociological analysis, we will attempt to answer a few questions: what's leadership, what are the issues arising from the leadership crisis, and is it possible to develop one's own leadership?

**What is Leadership?** Three great qualities allow us to recognize leaders. Firstly, their deep **commitment** to the company and their motivation to pursue its strategy. Secondly, **trust** which conveys a thorough knowledge of our strengths and weaknesses, allowing us to work with great confidence in our specific fields of expertise. Thirdly, it is essential to possess and demonstrate considerable **charisma** and people skills to mobilize resources and convince employees to share our vision.

**Are all managers good leaders?** A leader is a visionary who is fully committed and believes in the company's strategy and future. Such a person can be found at all company levels. But be careful: managers aren't necessarily leaders! According to Bennis (1989): "The manager does things right. The leader does the right things."

**What are the issues arising from the leadership crisis we are now facing?** We must first recognize the signs of the crisis in order to identify relevant issues. The lack of corporate leadership can be symptomatic of the **lack of a long-term vision** or even the absence of vision. Only earnings and profits are sought, whereas improving processes—the value add—is not. Moreover, an IBM study recently mentioned in the *Journal Les Affaires* reveals that 75% of corporate human resource managers in 40 **countries worry about their ability to hire and train future leaders**. The situation is similar in Quebec where the shortage of leaders is visible in entrepreneurship—the province has twice as few entrepreneurs than the rest of Canada, according to the *Fondation de l'entrepreneurship*.

**Since it's real, how can the crisis be explained?** According to several theorists, major confusion between leadership and management prompted this crisis, as noted in our definition, as well as **too much emphasis on results and on the short term**.

**What are the consequences?** These are complex and manifold, but here are the main ones:

- **Loss in the sharing of corporate values**—Leaders personify corporate values and if less people foster and share them, these values remain ideas on paper, misunderstood by employees.
- **Loss of long-term vision**—This results from the loss of values and the emphasis on management to the detriment of leadership: We don't concern ourselves anymore with the company's future five years from now, since we only need to meet our current budget objectives to do our job adequately.

**What are the qualities of a good leader?** According to Santa Clara University, these are:

- **Honesty:** Demonstrate integrity and foster this quality in all your actions.
- **Competence:** Make decisions based on moral and rational principles, rather than emotions.
- **Long-term vision:** Achieve corporate long-term objectives in order of priority.
- **Inspiration and determination:** Have confidence in yourself, in everything that you do, and show determination and drive that will inspire your team and colleagues.
- **Intelligence:** Keep track of future industry challenges, new procedures, etc.
- **Fairness:** Be fair when making decisions, show empathy, and avoid bias.

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(mentioned in the *Journal Les Affaires*)



For a good leadership program in enterprise, it's important to formulate long-term objectives and to put less pressure on short term objectives... more easy said than done!

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- **The financial crisis**—Henry Mintzberg, management theorist at McGill University, with the endorsement of Harvard Business School Professor Bill George, claims that **the current financial crisis is in fact a leadership crisis!** This would certainly be the most tangible and the most serious consequence arising from the inability to develop enduring companies and, more specifically, the inability to position leaders at all corporate levels... When senior management fails or when short-term results are unsatisfactory, the company is practically non-existent!

**Is it possible to develop one's own leadership?** Some people definitely have a predisposition to become leaders, such as distinctive personal qualities or competencies. But most experts agree that leadership can be developed.

**On the individual level:** Leadership is not a tangible or rational thing and can't be gleaned just from reading books. It is first and foremost a relational issue that involves a lot of psychology, since leadership rests on considerable self-confidence and assurance. But not everything goes on in one's head, since it is also important to work on a few tangible issues:

- **Establish good communications with employees:** Explain why such a task has to be done and what is expected from a specific project instead of just saying "do this".
- **Position oneself at the heart of corporate issues** and take the initiative whenever possible to gain confidence and credibility.
- **Develop a healthy interpersonal awareness:** Acknowledge the importance of your employees' problems, recognize their merit, etc.; this will nurture your charisma and motivate your troops.

You can become a leader at any corporate level. And employers must not rely exclusively on senior management for leadership!

**At the corporate level:** Training your employees to help them become better leaders is a very profitable long-term strategy! Define your long-term objectives and agree to apply less pressure on short-term objectives to ensure the success of your leadership program. This simple idea is very hard to put into practice, because it contradicts all our

automatic reflexes for success! Here are a few specific tips for your corporate leadership program:

- **Recognize potential leaders as soon as they come into the company** and involve them quickly into a mentoring program, for example, or towards developing certain aptitudes for the benefit of their career.
- **Vary the tasks of some employees** even if this means that they will be less productive in some of their new activities; this will encourage their autonomy and the development of related skills that can't be learned from books (How to react in unfamiliar territory? How to take on new challenges?).
- **Follow-up on training** and performance, since an employee who doesn't receive feedback will never be able to improve.
- **Position leadership as a corporate value and mission** by going beyond words; it is therefore necessary that senior management also demonstrate solid leadership qualities or take part in training programs.

The SSA SOLUTION offers various programs to help you develop your own leadership skills or those of your managers. Among others, **managerial coaching** can prove to be an effective solution to help you personally develop your leadership skills. This program includes follow-ups adapted to your needs and expectations. Furthermore, when new managers come into the company, you want to quickly establish their leadership, enhance their credibility, and generate the motivation of employees reporting to them. To help you achieve this, we can organize a **Leadership Day** to allow employees to get better acquainted with their new managers, their objectives, their vision, etc. This type of event will also help mitigate the effects of efficiency slowdown linked to the hiring of new resources.

It is therefore important to remember that leadership is crucial to any company, that it must be developed and encouraged at all levels, as well as communicated through the corporate mission and values. Also of note, leadership is within everyone's reach. You don't need to be part of the executive team for it to be important for your career and the organization!

### Our next e-newsletter: Embrace change!

Consumers' tastes change all the time, just like technology and the competition. And so, any changes actually represent a huge challenge for all companies having to develop their ability to quickly respond to change. The challenge consists of being quick to adapt to change and instil the philosophy of change in all employees throughout the company.

In our next e-newsletter, we will be discussing the issues concerning change management and the importance of managing change effectively. We will also talk about the major challenges associated with change and what companies can expect over the next few years, such as what they will definitely need to adapt to quickly!