Awakened leaders: born or made?

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Abstract

Purpose
This paper aims to review the leader of the twenty-first century, the Awakened Leader. Based on information, collected from 11 leadership thinkers and practitioners, literature review, and the author's workplace observations, the article seeks to analyze some of the important experiences and skills that make awakened leaders so outstanding.

Design/methodology/approach
This study was conducted as a qualitative study of the phenomenological kind, enriched with literature review. Interviews were executed from a pre-validated interview protocol. The approach to the topic is: definition of awakened leadership; review of the essence of awakened leadership; reasoning of the determination regarding this leader being born or made; and perspectives toward awakened leadership.

Findings
An interesting combination of qualities emerged for awakened leaders varying from morals and values, ethics, integrity, honesty and trust, to kindness, forgiveness, courage, love, and deep listening. As an interesting endnote the article explains why practicing awakened leadership is easy and difficult at the same time.

Research limitations/implications
The studies reviewed, although in-depth, applied to a small sample of leaders, which makes generalization riskier. Because leadership is such a broad and dynamic topic, literature review is never exhausted, and thus always relatively outdated.

Practical implications
Leaders may reconsider the skills required for themselves and their workforce to guarantee successful performance in an increasingly interconnected world. Leaders may engage in reflection and work toward stronger emphasis and development of skills in which they consider themselves weak. Leaders may reexamine their work environment and consider how to minimize the factors that complicate the practice of awakened leadership in their organization.

Originality/value
The phenomenon of awakened leadership as an all-encompassing and multi-applicable leadership trend is shown in the paper.

Keywords
Ethics, Social values, Trust, Job satisfaction, Leadership, Justice

Citation

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Some people believe that leaders are born with the necessary qualities that make them successful as a leader. While others believe that leadership, like many other similar characteristics, can be learned and developed through life. For me, I think much of the debate depends on how you define leadership. Based on that definition, I can certainly see the argument that leaders are born with leading qualities when I see my daughter using her inherent ability to influence her little brother (and sometimes her parents) to do the things she wants them to do. If leadership means being courageous and willing to speak out for the betterment of those around you, I would think that leaders do not have to be born as such. The very best leaders are born with distinctive capabilities, enabling them to captivate the masses. "Shakespeare called them 'becoming graces,'" said John Adair, author of Lessons in Leadership and How to Lead Others. Adair also listed some of the qualities that make a great leader: "Enthusiasm, integrity, [being] tough or demanding but fair, warmth or humanity, and humility – no arrogance or self-importance." Arguably, many of these qualities are intrinsic – can warmth, for example, be taught? We see it in everyday life too: there are certain people we meet who have a natural charisma, a way Leadership and Management. Are Leaders Born or Made? April 4, 2013 by Dr. Jon Warner in Leadership and Management. In this article, we will briefly look at the overall general thinking about leadership that has occurred over the last 100 years or so. On the "leaders are made side", in-born characteristics make it easier and more natural to seek out experiences that build a repertoire of leadership competencies. These include the development of written and oral communications skills, the confidence required to inspire and influence others ("charisma"), social adeptness and cultural intelligence. These talents are most often measured through interviews and simulations of typical leadership tasks (e.g. conducting a mock performance review, conducting a coaching session; prioritizing and delegating a set of projects; making an inspirational speech). What makes it easier is that people tend to ask me a few questions over and over. By far the most common (in fact, I have yet to do an interview where this question wasn’t asked) is "Are leaders born or made?" Interestingly, I’ve noticed that most interviewers think they already know the correct answer: they believe leaders are born. That is, they assume that some people come into this world with a natural capacity to lead, and everybody else doesn’t, and there’s not much you can do about it. What I’ve learned by observing thousands of people in business over