STAR *Performance Systems*

The Core Attributes of Truly Great Leaders
The VIP Leader Study

A Star Performance Systems White Paper by Sherry Buffington, Ph. D.

Executive Summary

Not quite golden?

The number one goal of organizations today has become that of finding exceptional leaders to effectively guide and engage a diverse workforce. What seems to be driving this trend is a monumental shift in the attitude and approach of the emerging workforce, which many leaders are unprepared to manage, the general failure of standard development practices to engage and motivate the workforce and the ineffectiveness of downsizing and reorganization in keeping profits healthy.

The ever present and very expensive hiring mistakes made at leadership levels by organizations recently and over the past decade, such as Morgan-Stanley, Radio Shack, ales, Hewlett-Packard and Seibel Systems (see Dallas Morning News sidebar), the fall of corporate giants such as Enron and Worldcom a few years back, and the more recent woes of long established companies, such as JCPenney, have brought home the realization that finding effective ways to determine and/or develop the skills and abilities of top performing leaders is imperative.

Organizations are realizing that they can no longer afford to take shortcuts in leadership development or selecting the right person for the job since a blown executive hire can cost a company millions of dollars. Beyond direct severance costs and business disruption, there is another cost that was aptly identified by Wharton Professor Luke Taylor as "entrenchment costs." Taylor's model found that the entrenchment cost per CEO firing was, on average, $1 billion -- far more than the hundreds of millions in direct costs. He noted, "2% of Fortune 500 CEOs on average are fired every year." That's a lot of wasted dollars.

Hiring and performance problems persist in spite of close scrutiny at leadership levels, the administration of batteries of assessments, multiple interviews, developmental initiatives and huge investments in training, now *a $70 billion industry.* They persist not only because organizations are not looking deeply and broadly enough, but because they are looking in the wrong places. The right place was suggested in the book, *Good to Great* by Jim Collins (Harper Collins 2001), but inadequate measures and methods have prevented the majority of organizations from taking advantage of the data he gathered.

This white paper is the result of research conducted by Dr. Sherry Buffington and her team after evaluating the data presented in *Good to Great* with the goal of discovering the core attributes of what Collins called "Level 5 Leaders" and who we have come to call **VIP Leaders**.

The VIP
Leader Study

A dozen years after the wildly popular and widely read leadership book, *Good to Great,* hit bookshelves and landed on the desks of tens of thousands of leaders and managers little had changed. Though researcher and author Jim Collins made it very clear that the first move any leader should make is to "get the right people on the bus," few organizations are actually doing that and there are several reasons why. This white paper explores the one we believe is most critical: lack of strong, effective, high performance leaders; the kind of leader Jim Collins called "Level 5 Leaders."

In *Good to Great,* Collins talked about how difficult it was to find L5 Leaders and how many organizations he and his team examined to find the fifteen he profiled. He described the most obvious traits of L5 Leaders and gave some very good examples of how they behaved. As the designers of the CORE line of assessments, we were intrigued by his description and aware that it pointed to leaders who would profile on the *CORE Multidimensional Awareness Profile* (CORE MAP) as well developed in at least two areas (trait sets) and as emotionally competent in at least three.

To test the hypothesis, we set out to find leaders that fit the Level 5 model. To date, we have assessed and analyzed the profiles of 63 leaders identified by peers, employees and associates as Level 5 Leaders using the in-depth CORE MAP system combined with interviews.

We came to refer to these leaders as VIP Leaders because, along with the traits of humility and the willingness to make hard decisions which Collins indentified, we found that virtually every exceptionally effective leader we assessed and interviewed had three key attributes which, conveniently, form the acronym VIP. VIP leaders are **V**isionary, **I**nfluential and **P**rogressive. We found these three key attributes to be consistently present in high performance leaders.

VIP Leaders are:

Visionary   Have keen insight and foresight, which they use to advance the company and its people.

Influential   Are powerfully and pleasantly compelling and capable of inspiring and motivating others such that they consistently get the best out of people.

Progressive   Forward thinking; have the skills and abilities to move projects and people forward to get things done faster and more efficiently.

Charisma

VIP Leaders also possess the characteristic many people identify as "magnetism" or "charisma." When examined closely, we find three attributes that magnetic or charismatic people have and VIP Leaders possess them all.

1. They exude confidence, which increases the trust factor

Confident people are generally positive because they are satisfied with who they are and what they do. They don't criticize or try to place blame on others. Instead, they focus on what they want to see emerging and inspire its emergence.

2. They make people feel special

VIP leaders treat people—all people—like VIPs in that they give whomever they are with, no matter what that person's position in the company or in life, their undivided attention. VIP Leaders are thoughtful, considerate, generous and genuinely interested in helping people reach their highest potential, not just for the company or their own purposes, but also for the growth and development of the individual.

3. They take themselves lightly

Though they are confident and capable, they are also authentic and humble. VIP Leaders typically consider leadership to be a role of service rather than privilege, and they are quick to convey that they feel privileged to be serving people inside their company and out.

No Hubris Here

We found, as Jim Collins did, that the majority of VIP Leaders are not well known and they are perfectly content with that fact. Because they don't tend to put themselves on pedestals or go seeking the limelight, finding VIP Leaders is not an easy task. That may be, in part, because there are not a lot of them, but there may be more than we know. They tend to stay under the radar and unless their people or peers do the bragging for them, they remain relatively anonymous. We found virtually all of the leaders for our study through the recommendations or reporting of other people.

Most VIP Leaders don't think they are doing anything unusual so don't see any reason to call attention to themselves. But, whether they see it or not, they are most certainly doing something unusual. Though they share many natural traits with typical CEOs and executives, VIP Leaders have developed them to far healthier levels, and they have somehow avoided the corporate trap that so many leaders and managers get caught in. They are effectively using traits most corporate leaders avoid, and much to the benefit of the company and its people as it turns out.

The CORE Difference

Because CORE MAP measures broader and deeper than other assessments, we were able to see how well various traits were developed in VIP Leaders as compared to leaders who fall short of this ideal. We were able to see how they cope under stress, what attributes they call on to manage stress, what attributes they use on an average day, and how they tend to use them.

We have thousands of leader profiles in our database so were able to compare those of VIP Leaders to a large sample of ordinary leaders. What our research revealed is that many leaders have the "right stuff" in that they possess the same basic traits as VIP Leaders. What was markedly different was the degree to which those traits were developed in the VIP Leader and undeveloped and/or reactionary in the comparison group.

We also found that VIP Leaders possess very different traits than most organizations seek out and prize. The most prized traits were certainly present in Visionary Leaders, but did not exist in the order in which they are prized in typical organizations or to the degree most organizations believe necessary. On the other hand, traits often dismissed as unimportant or "too soft" or "squishy" in many organizations were well developed and often the most frequently used by VIP Leaders.

Leadership Traits Most Organizations Seek in the Order of Their Importance:

Most Prized ("Commander" traits in the CORE system)
- The desire to get things done
- Achievement drive
- Willingness to lead
- Direct, to the point communications
- A take-charge assertive style
- Goal orientation
- Ability to see the big picture
- Problem-solving
- Decisiveness – the ability to make quick, firm decisions
- The ability to strategize well
- Willingness to meet challenges
- Cool-headedness in emergencies
- The ability to anticipate the future as it relates to things, work, and achievement

Second Most Prized ("Organizer" traits in the CORE system)
- The desire to get things right
- A serious, deliberate approach to work
- A sense of duty and responsibility to do a good job
- A sense of order, structure, precision and predictability
- A thorough, orderly, methodical or systematic approach
- The desire to finish what is started
- The ability to plan carefully and check plans
- Ability to work well within hierarchies
- A clear opinion of right and wrong
- Ability to analyze closely and attend to specifics - likes schedules, lists, charts, graphs, numbers
- Ability to analyze and consider what might go wrong
- Patience in dealing with details and procedures
- Attention to details as they relate to things, facts, figures

Third Most Prized ("Entertainer" traits in the CORE system)

- The desire and willingness to be highly visible
- Social ability
- Verbal acuity - ability to communicate one-on-one or in groups
- Boldness with people - uninhibited in connecting with others
- Ability to stimulate action and excitement
- Ability to keep things light, upbeat and interesting
- Charisma, charm, creativity and colorfulness
- Ability to influence and inspire others
- Spontaneous innovativeness
- Ability to enjoy play and be light-hearted
- Ability to multi-task
- Ability to lead others into new activities and adventures
- Ability to allow self to be as important as others
- The ability to anticipate the future as it relates to people, experience, and innovation
- The ability to trust feelings in an intuitive way

Least Prized ("Relater" traits in the CORE system)

- The desire to get along with others and to build and sustain long-term relationships
- Thoughtfulness, consideration and loyalty to others
- Genuine empathy
- Conscientiousness and obedience
- Willingness to follow the lead of others as necessary
- Good listening and observational skills
- Flexibility and an easygoing attitude
- Patience and ease in relating to and accepting others
- Team cohesiveness
- Creating environments that promote harmony and balance
- Attention to details as they relate to people, aesthetics
- Willingness to mediate toward more harmonious relationships
- Acceptance of others

Most Prized Order

Notice that the order typically prized by organizations for leaders is **Commander-Organizer-Entertainer-Relater (COER).**

Typically Found Order

The typical order of development for ordinary leaders is **Commander-Organizer-Relater-Entertainer (CORE)**, primarily because displays of feeling are discouraged in many organizations and Entertainers boldly display their feeling side when Entertainer is not held in check.

Though the Relater trait set is the one least prized in *leaders*, Entertainer behaviors are the ones most frequently discouraged in typical organizations. The Entertainer style is frequently viewed as too "out

there," too spontaneous, too unpredictable and too openly emotional. Yet this was either the dominant or secondary style for 94% of the VIP Leaders in the study.

VIP Order
The typical order for VIP Leaders is **Commander-Entertainer-Relater-Organizer (CERO).** Notice that the trait set that is second most prized by organizations is *least preferred* and least used by VIP Leaders, while the free-to-be-emotive Entertainer is secondary.

VIP Leaders are Positive

A significant finding was that all four trait sets were developed to healthy levels in VIP Leaders. What this means is that VIP Leaders have an entire cache of positive, highly effective traits to call upon on any given day and in any situation. Developed to healthy levels does *not* mean equally developed. In a healthy profile, the dominant, secondary, tertiary (backup) and least preferred (dormant) trait sets are developed in descending order and the tertiary and least preferred styles are being used as tools to accomplish specific goals rather than as daily functions. Every one of the VIP Leaders in the study had an assistant or partner that possessed the traits the VIP Leader least preferred, which in 93.6% was Organizer, and each used that trait set as little as possible.

In the few leaders where Organizer was not the dormant style, it was the tertiary or backup style in all but three, where it was the secondary style. However, in these three, Entertainer and Relater were developed to healthy levels and Entertainer was the tertiary or backup style.

The numerical average of the Entertainer style, which most organizations greatly discount, was almost tied with that of Commander, the most prized leadership trait set. The overall difference in development between the two styles was only 8.5%. Many of the VIP Leaders in the study led with Entertainer, though in each case, Commander was the secondary style and exerted a strong influence.

VIP Leaders Have Heart

Another striking trend among the VIP Leaders was that most of them had very well developed preferences for the feeling function. Several leaders in the study, both male and female, led with feeling, and where the thinking function led, feeling was not far behind.

This flies in the face of everything most organizations believe makes a great leader. Organizations look for and push the Commander "get it done" and Organizer "get it right" traits and behaviors. Both are logical, thinking, left-brain styles. Yet only three leaders in the study actually led with this combination. Organizer was almost always in the dormant or backup position.

It is apparently the combination of the Commander trait set and the "soft", "squishy" feeling styles, Entertainer and Relater, that creates the most effective leaders. Organizer is used effectively, to be sure, but only as a tool in most and only as necessary. Though Relater was the backup style of most of the VIP Leaders, it was developed to a healthy level and humility, a Relater trait, was apparent in every leader we studied.

One Dallas-based organization that participated in the study, TD Industries, had three leaders, Jack Lowe, Ben Houston and John Ferguson, who were each identified by peers and employees as VIP Leaders. Each was assessed and interviewed separately, and each one gave the other two most of the credit for the company's success. It was apparent that each genuinely held that opinion too. Ben Houston, one of the three, described their leadership style as being like geese which, when flying in formation take turns leading in order to reduce the stress and fatigue of being at the head of the formation. Each recognized and valued the strengths of the other and each was willing to step aside and let the others take the lead as required.

No leader with a big ego would willingly step aside and turn the reins over to someone else. Most won't even relinquish control of a department, much less an entire organization.

As of 2012, TD Industries has had the well-earned honor of being on *Fortune* magazine's list of the *Best Companies to Work for in America* every year since the inception of that prestigious award. These three great leaders turned the company into an employee-owned enterprise, much like Southwest Airlines, another Dallas-based company founded by VIP Leader, Herb Kelleher.

A Palpable Difference

There is a palpable difference in organizations run by VIP Leaders. When you walk into one, you know this is a genuinely people-centered organization. They clearly know what their most valuable asset is and they let it shine.

At TD Industries, the first thing you see when you enter the building is a huge wall of employee photographs, beautifully framed and proudly displayed. They are ordered by the length of employment. Not surprisingly, most employees have been at TD Industries for more than ten years.

At Intuit, the maker of QuickBooks, TurboTax and other software, you walk into a warm, inviting lobby where rugs on the floor proclaim the company's employees to be "Honest", "Smart", "Committed", "Spirited", and "Real." And you believe it. The employees believe it too and it shows. Everyone you meet proudly displays those qualities.

Wall hangings at Intuit aren't just pretty pictures either. They are messages to all who enter the well-designed facility located on beautiful campus-like grounds. They bid employees and visitors to "Trust", "Innovate" and "Listen." They point them toward "Integrity", "Life", "Teams" and "People". The company's philosophy around each of these words is written below the big, bold word so there is no question where they stand.

Intuit has a reputation for excellence and very low employee turnover. In interviews, Intuit's HR Director shared their best practices:

- Leaders are held to a very high standard. First and foremost they must understand people.
- Leaders invest considerable time on employee development initiatives.
- They discuss how, why and what needs to be done and why it is important with employees.
- They encourage a significant amount of unstructured time for employees, which encourages creativity and innovation, and their healthy annual profits attest to the efficacy of this approach.
- They assess employee engagement levels annually and take a pulse mid-year, and have better than 90% voluntary employee participation in this program.
- They have a very diverse workforce and regular diversity training to help employees understand and appreciate one another.
- They actively hire and engage Generation X and Millennials and appreciate and utilize the current technical savvy they bring to the table. Their view is that, when it comes to technology, these individuals have a unique perspective and style that is accretive to the organization when pro-actively engaged.
- Leaders are taught to look at employees' humanity, not just at what they can do for the company.
- Leaders believe they can deliver great outcomes by ensuring employees have a great place to work and through customer driven innovation.
- They encourage and reward innovation.

- They allow for flexible work schedules where it makes sense and also provide the right technology and support to ensure success.
- They don't worry about where, how or when the work gets done as long as it gets done well and on time.

What Intuit is doing works well across all generations. Intuit CEO and VIP Leader, Brad Smith, is adamant about keeping things real and transparent.

Not surprisingly, just about every department or company we examined which is led by a VIP Leader operates under a similar philosophy and follows a similar path. Like TD Industries and Intuit, many of the organizations where we found VIP Leaders are now or have been listed as one of the *Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For.*

True Leadership

True leadership has been defined as the ability to persuade others to do things the way you want them done and *like it*. VIP Leaders are masters at this. They have made it a point to discover exactly what will motivate, inspire, positively influence and persuade their employees to do their best, and they use that information to create win/win environments. The leader wins by getting the desired result and the employees win because they are doing something they enjoy in an environment that supports and enhances them.

Theories X and Y

Theory X and Theory Y are theories of human motivation created and developed by Douglas McGregor at the MIT Sloan School of Management in the 1960s. These two contrasting models of workforce motivation have been used in human resource management, organizational behavior, organizational communication and organizational development since that time.

Theory X

As many leaders have discovered to their dismay, employees rarely give their all in a typical work setting where Theory X hierarchies reign. Theory X leaders assume employees are inherently lazy and will avoid work and responsibility whenever possible. The theory holds that people inherently dislike work and would rather not do it. In such a system, managers are required to closely supervise workers and comprehensive systems of controls are developed to ensure compliance. A hierarchical structure with a narrow span of control is needed at every level. According to this theory, employees will show little ambition without enticing incentive programs and continual external inducement. Theory X managers rely heavily on threat and coercion to gain their employees' compliance. The environment is restrictive and punitive. Trust is low vigilance high. This style was marginally effective in the industrial age when manual labor was the order of the day. It is woefully ineffective in today's world where an engaged brain is the most essential component for success. It is impossible to coerce mental and emotional engagement. In fact, any form of coercion actually shuts these functions down.

Theory Y

Theory Y leaders assume employees enjoy their mental and physical work duties, are self-motivated and will exercise self-control in the right environment. According to this theory, work is as natural as play and employees possess the ability to creatively solve problems. This theory holds that people underperform because their talents are underused or misused and, given the proper guidance and conditions, employees will be self-directed in accomplishing objectives to which they are committed. Theory Y

leaders believe that, given the right conditions, most people want to do well and that the satisfaction of a job well done is a strong motivation.

Theory Y leaders communicate more openly with subordinates and minimize the difference between superior-subordinate relationships, which builds trust and creates an environment more conducive to optimal development of skills and abilities. This climate in one of shared decision making such that subordinates have say in the decisions that influence them.

VIP Leaders across the board view people from a Theory Y perspective, but with an interesting twist. They expect the best from their people and their people know it. As long as employees are doing their best, they get positive feedback and almost limitless support from their VIP Leader. It's when they fall short of their potential that their leader gets tough, but never mean; there's a big difference.

This is the phenomenon Jim Collins observed as the unlikely combination of humility and toughness. One VIP Leader in our study described it using a football analogy. "When the team is playing as well as I know they can," he said, "I am on the sidelines cheering them on and I am their biggest supporter. But, if they are at the one yard line and are faltering, I'm going to go out there and kick their butts to get them over the finish line. They don't like it while it's happening, but when they make the touchdown, I'm the first guy they hug."

VIP Leaders generally get 100% of their people's energy and commitment, and with very little need to continually monitor them. They never coerce their people, or need to, but they do hold them to very high standards. They let their people know that they were hired because they are smart and capable. They are regularly reminded that their leader trusts them to do a great job and they know as long as they do, they are golden. They know what actions will be taken to correct poor behavior and know those actions will be taken consistently, fairly and equally across the entire company. The result is that trust and respect are very high and flow in both directions.

The Engagement Factor

Year after year since 2000, Gallup polls, which include millions of U. S. workers, show that the engagement level of U.S. workers has remained flat. Currently, as in every other poll taken, approximately 30% of the U.S. workforce is engaged in their work. The ratio of engaged to actively disengaged employees is roughly 2-to-1, which means that the vast majority of U.S. workers (70%) are not reaching their full potential — a problem that has significant implications for the economy and the individual performance of American companies.

Gallup Engagement Statistics for 2012

These latest findings indicate that:

- **52%** of workers are not engaged

- **18%** are actively disengaged (meaning they purposely undermine and even sabotage company goals and initiatives)

- **70%** is the total of American workers who are "not engaged" or "actively disengaged," emotionally disconnected from their workplaces and less likely to be productive.

- **30%** are engaged, and most of these are found in organizations or departments led by VIP Leaders

- Gallup estimates that actively disengaged employees cost the U.S. between **$450 billion to $550 billion** each year in lost productivity.

More Profits

Engaged workers (the top 25%) have significantly higher productivity, profitability, and customer satisfaction/loyalty ratings, less turnover and absenteeism, and fewer safety incidents than those in the bottom 25%.

Organizations with an average of 9.3 engaged employees for every actively disengaged employee experienced **147% higher earnings per share** (EPS) compared with their competition in 2011-2012. In contrast, those with an average of 2.6 engaged employees for every actively disengaged employee experienced 2% lower EPS compared with their competition during that same time period.

In many organizations, the ratio is 2.8 *disengaged* employees for every engaged employee. These organizations are bleeding profits and steadily losing ground in spite of the sometimes extreme measures they take in an effort to turn the tide.

The Critical Role of Leadership

According to Gallup research, managers and executives are emerging from the Great Recession with far more momentum than the average worker. More than one-third (36%) of managers and executives reported being engaged in their work 2012, up 10 percentage points from 2009. Unfortunately, that means 64% are still disengaged. The report states, "Managers from hell are creating active disengagement and costing the U.S. an estimated $450 billion to $550 billion annually."

Gallup found that managers who focus on their employees' strengths can practically eliminate active disengagement and double the average of U.S. workers who are engaged nationwide. The reason most don't is because they are not looking deeply and broadly enough to discover the authentic strengths and abilities of their employees or leaders. They make determinations based on self-reported and observable traits, which fail to take into account vitally important factors such as personal development, tolerance levels and coping skills.

Gallup Chairman and CEO, Jim Clifton says, "If your company reflects the average in the U.S., just imagine what poor management and disengagement are costing your bottom line. On the other hand, imagine if your company doubled the number of great managers and engaged employees. Gallup finds that the 30 million engaged employees in the U.S. come up with most of the innovative ideas, create most of a company's new customers, and have the most entrepreneurial energy. When leaders in the United States of America — or any country for that matter — wake up one morning and say collectively, 'Let's get rid of managers from hell, double the number of great managers and engaged employees, and have those managers lead based on what actually matters,' everything will change. The country's employees will be twice as effective, they'll create far more customers, companies will grow, spiraling healthcare costs will decrease, and desperately needed GDP will boom like never before."

Jim Clifton Chairman and CEO

We couldn't agree more, but to get to that place, companies need to take a new look at leadership and the qualities that lead to true greatness. The qualities defined in this paper are clearly the leadership qualities that must be nurtured and supported.

The idea that the workplace needs to run like a well-oiled and emotionless machine needs to be tossed out, and feelings need to be welcomed as the star-makers they actually are. In this, the information age, the only way to have high performance employees is to nurture feelings. It is feelings that unlock creativity

and innovation, generate drive, kick start energy, spark brilliant thinking and keep employees engaged and productive.

Feelings in the Workplace

Entertainer and Relater, two of the three best-developed trait sets seen in VIP Leaders, are products of the feeling function. Entertainer confers excellent communication and connection skills when developed effectively. Relater, when developed effectively, confers excellent relationship building and listening skills, and genuine empathy. The two in combination result in exceptional interpersonal skills, which leads to engagement, productivity and profit.

Most great orators and, as it turns out, most great leaders, have well developed Entertainer traits. Entertainers have the natural ability to be eloquent and charismatic speakers and when this trait set is developed effectively, they usually are. They connect with people easily and have a natural enthusiasm that is genuinely inspiring.

Organizations need leaders who have the feeling functions developed to healthy levels, but few do anything to make that happen. Most organizations actually discourage feeling in the workplace because they mistakenly believe feelings are messy. The reality is, feelings are only messy when they have been suppressed too long and are released only when stress gets too high to contain them. Feelings expressed in healthy ways always unite people and inspire them to greater performance.

If you want to know how feelings affect people when they are allowed to express in healthy ways, just go find a VIP Leader and talk with him or her for a few minutes. Then talk to that leader's people. You will come away from the experience transformed, not just in mind, but in spirit.

The Feeling Factor

VIP Leaders lead with heart as well as with intellect and logic, and they do it *in spite of* the prevailing corporate culture, not because of it.

Most VIP Leaders report that they learned their leadership style from great parents or a special teacher or mentor. Most corporations push logic and discourage feelings, but VIP Leaders know that they cannot connect with people through logic and they want to connect with the people they lead. They know that showing their people that they genuinely care about them and trust them to be amazing is the only way to have dedicated people regularly performing amazing feats.

VIP Leaders tend to be masters at communication. This is partly due to the high influence of the Entertainer trait set (communication skills) and of developed Relater traits (empathy), both of which confer exceptional interpersonal skills. The other part is the high degree of emotional intelligence seen in the effectiveness patterns of VIP Leaders.

CORE Patterns

The graphs below represent the patterns of VIP Leaders compared to those of a large percentage of leaders. "Average Leaders" are found everywhere, from small 50 employee companies to Fortune 100 Corporations, and from top executives to supervisors.
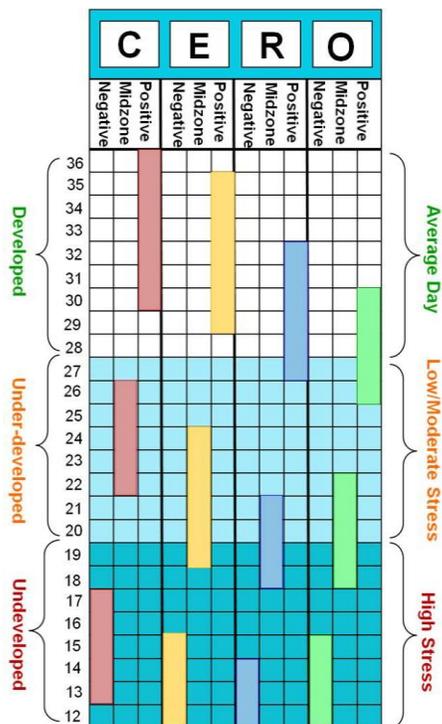
VIP Leader
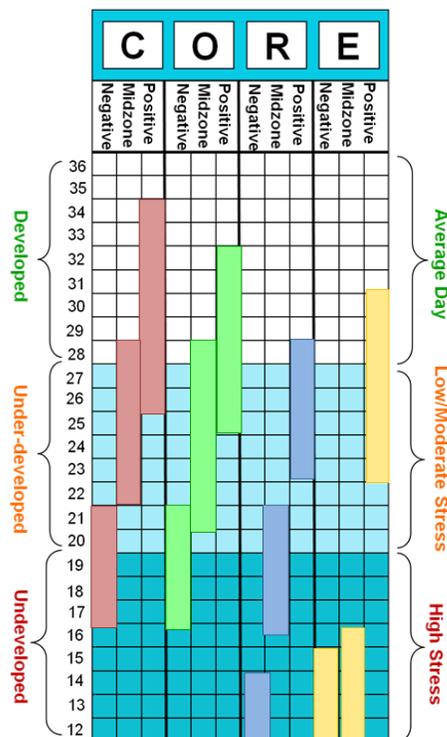
Average Leader

All four trait sets are used in a positive way and all four are non-reactionary *(the distance between the positive score and the mid-zone score and between mid-zone and negative).*	Positive Relater behaviors *(being considerate of others)* are often short-circuited by the mid-zone coping behaviors of Commander and/or Organizer *(the need to get it done and get it right).*

All four trait sets are used in a positive way and all four are non-reactionary *(the distance between the positive score and the mid-zone score and between mid-zone and negative).*

Both feeling styles are developed to healthy levels *(positive score).*

Organizer is the least preferred style, but is used effectively.

Entertainer is the secondary style and is used effectively even under stress *(mid-zone coping score).*

All four styles show a healthy degree of tolerance/patience *(the distance between the positive score and the mid-zone score and between mid-zone and negative)*

Positive Relater behaviors *(being considerate of others)* are often short-circuited by the mid-zone coping behaviors of Commander and/or Organizer *(the need to get it done and get it right).*

Both feeling styles (Relater and Entertainer) are underutilized, especially under stress.

Organizer is in the second position, but is reactionary, indicating stress around this style.

Entertainer is the least preferred style and is not used under stress. *(This is often true even when it is a secondary or backup style).*

Commander and Organizer show intolerance or impatience (*narrow distance between positive and mid-zone scores).*

Positive, Mid-zone and Negative Behaviors

Part three of CORE MAP measures behavior patterns. Behaviors shift for everyone at some point. The ideal is when they shift at the appropriate time and in the right order. The most preferred (dominant) style has the greatest sustainable energy and strength behind it and is therefore the most effective coping style. Conversely, the least preferred (dormant) has the least sustainable energy and strength and is the least effective coping style. Behaviors degrade with reduction from positive to negative behaviors and with reduction in sustainable energy and strength.

For an organization to ensure they are hiring and promoting the right people, it is critically important that they know how capably the individual is managing themselves, the environment and situations. This is also vitally important to know for developmental purposes in order to get laser focused on areas that need development. Without this knowledge, training and development take a shotgun approach and waste a lot of time and money.

Using assessments that measure only surface or observable traits are totally ineffective at discovering the deeper developmental factors.

The graphs below show sub-surface patterns for three people who, on the surface, look exactly alike. The first one has well-developed traits and a high level of EQ, and is functioning effectively across the board. This is a highly effective person. The second individual is using only the two thinking styles (C and O) on an average day and those are reactionary. The third is barely functional. Notice that the first score on the third profile is *negative* Commander, which indicates that this is a difficult person who is generally angry, aggressive and out of control.

These glaring differences wouldn't necessarily show up in an interview where everyone is conscious about being on their best behavior, but they show up soon after settling into a job.

C-O-R-E on the CORE MAP assessment is equivalent to ESTJ on the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), though many Commander/Organizers profile as ISTJ on the MBTI because MBTI describes extroversion as sociability rather than as boldness. It is equivalent to high D and high C on DISC.
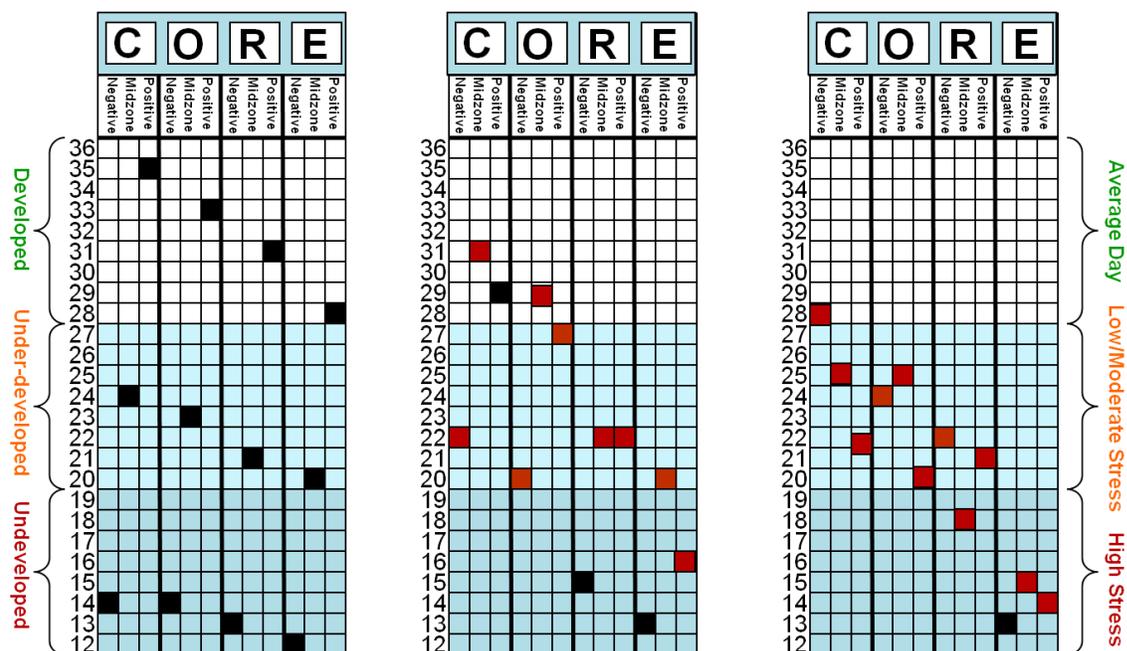
CORE Behaviors – Positive

An individual's behaviors are positive when they feel in control of self, the immediate environment and the situation. Here the locus of control is entirely internal. We feel we have control of ourselves, our immediate environment and our outcomes.

Positive Commanders are the true leaders of the world. They are decisive, goal-directed, confident, and capable. They are driven to succeed, and don't mind taking others to the top with them. They know what it takes to achieve an outcome and they understand that there is power in cooperation. They are excellent delegators who will assign complete projects to others and never ask more of their people than they are willing to do themselves. They are honorable, helpful, considerate and highly motivated to seek out and *get* positive results that will allow everyone to win. They want to control their own destinies, but have no desire to control others. They believe that the best way to achieve their own goals is to help others achieve their goals as well. They are independent, adventurous, conscientious, efficient, capable, love a challenge, and can do just about anything they set their mind to. They are ever willing to help others help themselves, but refuse to handhold or act as a crutch. They mentor, manage and lead willingly where they see potential. Positive Commanders seek to inspire and motivate, rather than to control.

Positive Organizers are reserved and careful, but not overly cautious or suspicious. They are keenly observant, noticing details that others usually miss. They attend to details easily and are real jewels to have around where close attention to detail is crucial. They are perceptive, sensitive and alert to subtle changes in environment or mood, so they catch things before they get out of hand. They are serious and industrious at work, and dependable at home. They can be counted on to do what they say they will do and to carry out projects to the very end. They are quiet, unobtrusive, and always willing to do their part to achieve goals. They are very protective of the people and things they care about and will champion their causes endlessly if that is what it takes to effect positive change. Though they don't show their feelings easily, they have great depth of feeling. They can be idealistic, working long and hard to create the world they believe every living creature deserves. They see interactions as mutually protective alliances, where all parties feel safe and secure. While they are strict on themselves, wanting to control their environment, insofar as is possible, they prefer to teach by example and reason rather than to control others.

Positive Relaters are gentle souls who are genuinely caring, considerate and compassionate. They are deeply interested in the welfare of people and work at making relationships positive and effective. They see and anticipate the needs of others and are ever willing to lend a helping hand or a sympathetic ear when needed. They express their own wants and needs, but seldom make demands on others. Though there is a natural tendency to defer decisions to others, they recognize that indecisiveness can be detrimental to them and to building healthy relationships and so, have generally learned decision-making skills. They are great team players who work well with others. Though they don't typically aspire to lead, they make excellent managers and supervisors who earn trust and deep loyalty from their followers.
They are ever willing to adjust themselves in the interest of harmony, but will not allow themselves to be abused. Positive Relaters see meaningful relationships the essence of life. Happy, healthy relationships are central to their own happiness. They have no need or desire to control others. Their aim and goal is one of mutually supportive and beneficial relationships. No one is better at building long term relationships than a positive Relater.

Positive Entertainers can be the most colorful and interesting people in the world. They are open and honest about their feelings, expressing themselves easily and comfortably. They enjoy a large variety of new experiences, can handle change and lack of predictability well and enjoy multi-tasking. They see variety as the spice of life. As creative visionaries, they can be very innovative. Their optimism, passion and genuine enjoyment of life are contagious. They can turn the most mundane of events into something interesting with their flair for recounting an event in bold, colorful ways. They have a knack for inspiring and motivating others. Positive Entertainers are warm, friendly, demonstrative and completely delightful to be around. They truly enjoy people and are comfortable in large groups, but don't need to be the center of attention. They have learned that they can be more effective by sharing the limelight with others. They have no need to control others, preferring to inspire them instead...and at that, they are masters.

CORE Behaviors – Mid-Zone

We move to mid-zone coping behaviors when the environment or situation seems out of our control. At this point, we have an internal locus of personal control and an external locus of environmental and/or situational control – we don't feel like we have control of the world outside ourselves or of the situation we find ourselves in and begin manipulating the external world (people, situations and events) in an attempt to gain a sense of control.

People who function from mid-zone are constantly coping. They vacillate unpredictably between positive and negative behaviors, depending on the situation or circumstance.

Mid-zone Commanders – Under stress, they can be argumentative, pushy, irritable, stubborn, somewhat controlling and obstinate when things aren't going their way, but they can also resemble a positive Commander when things are going well. They don't generally move to the levels of abuse that are common to the very negative Commander, unless pushed too hard. They have a low tolerance for slowness, or what they view as inefficiency in others, and can quickly become frustrated and impatient. Mid-zone Commanders believe that interactions are mainly for the purpose of furthering one's goals and they tend to ignore or discount those who cannot contribute to their idea of success in some way. They are very serious about their own goals, and will not hesitate to step on a few toes, if they feel they must, to get what they want. They tend to control through demands or coercion.

Mid-zone Organizers – Under stress, they can become cautious, skeptical and apprehensive and sarcastic. They want the rightness of an action or idea proven to them before they are willing to act on it. They may be so hung up on perfectionism that they find themselves stuck in inaction because they can't be certain of a perfect result or outcome. They tend to be too focused on minute details, which can slow their progress and cause them (and others) a great deal of stress and distress. Their relationships with others can suffer because of their need to be right or perfect, which they insist on trying to develop in those around them as well. This makes them appear critical, aloof and judgmental. They see interactions as neutral at best and sometimes as a necessary evil they could do without. They are rather cautious and guarded even in personal in relationships. They control by manipulation, which can range from mild to coercive.

Mid-zone Relaters – Under stress, they can be somewhat passive and reserved, but can function fairly effectively except where there is a threat of conflict or disapproval. When they perceive a threat, they withdraw and can become more needy or dependent than usual. When in situations they perceive as neutral or friendly, they can be quite pleasant to be around. They appear moody because they are dependent on others to set the mood and then they react accordingly. If those around them are acting the least bit aggressive, they perceive a potentially threatening situation and move toward negative behaviors as a self-protective measure. If those around them are including them and the Mid-zone Relater feels safe, they tend to move toward positive behaviors. They, like the Negative Relater, gain any semblance of control over others (more unconsciously than consciously) through eliciting guilt or pity.

Mid-zone Entertainers – Under stress, they can be somewhat insecure and require more attention than positive Entertainers, but can at times control the urge to be the center of attention. They tend to be more predictable than negative Entertainers, but still somewhat scattered. They can be overly emotional too going from top-of-the-world headiness to totally depressed and back again in the space of an hour. Mid-zone Entertainers tend to wear their emotions on their sleeves for the world to see, and they play them for all they are worth. When in a positive frame of mind, they can be genuinely delightful to be around and when in a negative one, a real annoyance. The most observable things about mid-zone Entertainers is their rapid and unpredictable changeability and their inability to stay focused on a task for too long. Mid-zone Entertainers see interactions as important and necessary at times and as a pure hassle at others. As a result, they may be warm and friendly one moment and purposely cold and distant the next. They control through an entire range of behaviors from overpowering others to manipulating them. Manipulations range from overly sweet (and often transparent) comments and appeals, to sulking and pouting.

CORE Behaviors – Negative

We move to negative behaviors when we feel out of control of self, the environment and/or the situation. At negative, we are not coping effectively on any level. Primary needs become exaggerated. We stop taking any blame for our actions and project the fault onto others, the environment or the situation. We attempt to manipulate the external world (people, situations and events), but are ineffective at doing so because of low levels of personal control. Stereotypes are built around the negative types because they are generally difficult people who command our attention.

Negative Commanders tend to be bossy, controlling, argumentative, hard to please, overly aggressive, insensitive, and thoughtless. Their goal is to win and they will do whatever it takes, including steam rolling over those who get in their way. Though they may appear caring at times, it's usually a calculated move to get ahead. They use and take advantage of people and situations, regularly placing their own desires ahead of the needs and feelings of others. They can be abusive (both physically and psychologically). They believe in win/lose interactions and their goal is to always be on the winning side. Negative Commanders have little empathy, so causing others pain is of little consequence to them, especially if it gets them what they want. In fact, those at the extreme end of the negativity scale actually enjoy watching others squirm in discomfort. They control through intimidation, humiliation, threats and punishment, if not outright abuse.

Negative Organizers tend to be suspicious, argumentative, sarcastic and uncompromising. They believe their position is the only right one and are unwilling to consider the thoughts and ideas of others. They believe the whole world is a hostile place and that they must constantly be on guard. They accuse others of deliberately sabotaging their efforts, often with no evidence to support their position. They trust no one fully, not even their families or the few people they claim as friends. Everyone is out to get them in some way. They never forget a slight and tend to reuse things from the past again and again to prove their point and hold onto their grudge. When not arguing, cajoling, manipulating or complaining, they are withdrawn and reclusive. They see interactions as lose/lose...there are no real winners in life; everyone must lose something. They control by manipulating, shaming and embarrassing others.

Negative Relaters are what is commonly known as co-dependent. Negative Relaters are very passive and refuse to take a stand on anything. Because they are overly concerned about creating any kind of conflict, disappointing someone, or hurting their feelings, they won't stand up for themselves or disagree with others, even when they know the others to be wrong. Negative Relaters have great difficulty initiating projects, expressing their ideas or speaking up in group discussions. They are easily hurt by the slightest criticism or disapproval, so they avoid areas where these are possible. Negative Relaters require approval so much that they will volunteer to do unpleasant or demeaning things in order to get others to like and approve of them. They feel helpless and are extremely unhappy or uncomfortable when alone, so they go to great lengths to find ways to have others around on whom they can depend. They have very poor coping skills, so they tend to go from acting very passive and helpless to becoming very aggressive, blowing up and throwing tantrums whenever they feel threatened. They see most interactions as threatening, but seek comfort by leaning on others. They control by eliciting guilt or pity.

Negative Entertainers tend to be excessively emotional and overly dramatic. They must have constant attention and will do almost anything to get it. They can go from overly charming to whining, loud, demanding, and boisterous. To be around a negative Entertainer can be completely exhausting, because they rarely stop talking, and they are scattered and somewhat hyperactive. They are constantly moving about or moving objects to the point of creating a distraction at best and being disruptive at worst. Their need for constant attention, preferably from the opposite sex, may cause them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, flirting and acting seductive at times when such behaviors are out of place. Their emotions, though highly visible and quite dramatic, are generally shallow and superficial. They tend to be very self-centered and everything has a "me" component to it. They are too general in their communication for most people to be able to follow their line of thought, and too willing to sacrifice verbal content for what they consider color and pizzazz. They are completely unpredictable, jumping from interest to interest and from project to project, completing little to nothing of what they start. They see interactions as opportunities for attention. They control through overpowering others conversationally, through insults, through inducing guilt, or by just wearing people down.

Conclusion

Profile of a VIP Leader

With the CORE MAP system, we were able to get beyond surface behaviors and see how well or poorly all trait sets were developed; where and when positive, mid-zone coping and negative behaviors were being used, and how those in the study acted and reacted in varying situations, from relatively stress free to high stress. As a result, we were able to see factors that were not visible to Collins in his study. The significant trends we uncovered were:

1. **Commander as a dominant or secondary style**, which was no surprise because Commander is the most prized trait set for leaders, and Commander is the most likely of the four styles to seek leadership roles. Even in the rare instance that this style is not dominant or secondary, it is well developed in VIP Leaders.

2. **A coping pattern that reveals slight impatience around Commander**. In interviews, leaders agreed that there was generally a sense of urgency around the primary Commander need to get things done. Many explained it as purposefully maintaining a sense of urgency to make sure their people had what they needed when they needed it. That VIP Leaders used this impatience to the benefit of their people and the company was reflected in the fact that overall Commander patterns were very healthy (positive traits well developed; non-reactionary patterns).

3. **Entertainer as a dominant or close secondary style**, in spite of the fact that most organizations do not place a high value on the Entertainer style and no not tend to encourage it.

4. **Higher than expected feeling scores in males as well as females**. Feeling is generally discouraged in the world of business. We frequently see the feeling function suppressed in the profiles of corporate leaders, especially when the leader is under stress. Apparently, VIP Leaders have not bought into the "don't bring your feelings to work" mentality. Their effective use of the feeling function is a primary factor in their overall success as a leader.

5. **The healthy development and frequent use of positive Relater traits** in dealing with their people, though Relater was almost never used to cope with stressful situations.

6. **The tendency for Organizer traits to be the least preferred and least utilized**, except for initial planning and coping with crises, in spite of the fact that this trait set is highly prized in most organizations.

7. **The odd combination of slight impatience around getting things done (Commander) coupled with high empathy and patience with people (Relater).** This dichotomy was generally explained as resulting from a sense of urgency in accomplishing desired outcomes combined with great faith in the people the leader placed in charge of the task.

8. **The tendency to consider personal wants and needs last when under stress**. The leaders in the study were focused on the well-being of their people and on getting the result with almost equal intensity. Many stated that they placed very little attention on self in a crisis because *self* was the best understood and most predictable part of the equation.

9. **A high degree of concern for the well-being of their people;** an ability conferred by the healthy development of the Relater trait set.

10. **Exceptional interpersonal skills**. VIP Leaders show great ease in connecting with people at any level and under almost any circumstance. An ability conferred by the high and healthy development of the Entertainer trait set.

11. **A different focus on challenges**. Over the years, we have interviewed thousands of managers and asked them to name the source of their greatest challenge. Ninety-eight percent of ordinary leaders name employees. Great leaders rarely do. VIP Leaders tend to name the challenges their people face and their own feelings of inadequacy when they are unable to help their people meet those challenges. VIP Leaders see their employees as their greatest asset. They expect great things from them and actively look for ways to bring out their best. Their sense of challenge is in finding effective ways to help their people be their best and understanding each of them well enough to lead them effectively.

12. **Effective development of all four trait sets**, which provides a full array of tools for managing whatever arises.

13. **Organizer being the least preferred trait set** and the least developed in 97% of the study group.

14. **Like Collins, we found that VIP Leaders were ever open to learning and growing**. They don't look at problems and assume they exist because their people are not trained well enough. They look at themselves and question what they need to learn to be a more effective leader. VIP Leaders advocate continuous improvement and constantly invest in it for themselves and their employees.

15. **Unlike ordinary leaders, VIP Leaders regularly get feedback from their employees** to discover what they want and need to improve themselves and get the best outcomes. They do not make assumptions that can, and in typical organizations often do, prove costly.