

THE ESSENTIALS OF LEADERSHIP INCLUDE THREE KEY SKILLS:

- 🚩 To generate followers.
- 🚩 Take them where they wouldn't normally go.
- 🚩 Create new leaders for the future.

So who has the Midas touch?

One of the most important words for leaders of countries or companies is Authenticity.

“Gordon Brown’s honeymoon period seemed to show a high level of conviction, a man taking the high ground,” says *LeaderShape*’s Greg Young.

“But there was a dissonance between his apparent values and his actions. Withdrawing troops from Iraq and prompting speculation of an early election may have been decisive, dithering or downright dirty. It may have been simply a spoiler for the Conservatives during the party conference season.”

With a series of challenges such as foot and mouth disease, the floods and more, Brown bunkered down. Taking control, going to ground and adopting a managerial style may have failed to engage, delegate and communicate to the people. *LeaderShape* would have liked a more visible leader, not one fumbling in the background.

Cameron, the unknown.

So is the young pretender to the throne more authentic?

“Inevitably the newcomer wishes to counter pose what Brown is doing,” says Young. “Cycling to work followed by the ministerial Jag is hardly the tone to set. Cameron needs to look true to his blue-blooded roots while second-guessing what the people at large, without his background, may want from their lives.”

The added Tory challenge is to pull the organisation to the centre ground. We’ll be watching to see if Cameron has the ability to keep everyone on side.

Over the water, the same debate.

Obama wants to talk to Ahmadinejad of Iran and there are detractors who scoff at his inexperience. In a different region waging the war on terror, McCain says: “I’ll stay in Afghanistan for a hundred years.” His message may be oddly reminiscent for us of the Iron Lady and Ireland – “We don’t talk to terrorists.”

So, what characteristics make the difference regarding who will be the next President or Prime Minister?

Innovative leader	Experienced leader
Adapts to new situations	Knows a particular solution didn't work last time – so assumes it won't work now
Needs to pull in resources to deal with times of difficulty	Relies on own resources, may need to pull in innovators to provide new thinking
Charisma to revitalise a jaded electorate	Comfort factor of familiarity
Can't be tested until in office	Proven ability to take the hard decisions
May lead agenda	Steady hand when hard times are ahead

Greg Young brings the debate back home:

“You may know leaders of both types in your organisation. Compare them with Brown – a man who takes responsibility for outcomes but tries to manage and control, rather than leading and inspiring.

Meanwhile, Cameron needs to get out among the people, demonstrating empathy. He's been in the saddle a while, but do we feel he's been sufficiently tested?

Your Brownian CEO should learn to delegate, bring in some contrasts to his experience and shake up the team.

The Cameronian must listen to the answers to a different set of questions. It's a subtle change to ask “How's things?” rather than “How's that project going?” But this is a way of learning what keeps the staff awake at night.

For both, there is a major leadership challenge; it's becoming far too comfortable in the director suite. They need to get out and look around, perhaps right down to the warehouse. Changing organisations is uncomfortable. We're still waiting for our political masters to really lead by example.”

To comment on this article or seek advice regarding company leadership strategies, please contact Greg Young - gyoung@leadershape.biz