

***Great Leaders: Are they Born or Made?***

Henry Kissinger once said that "The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been." No one can deny that the act being a leader is an enormous job and that the best and worst leaders are remembered throughout history. What no one has determined thus far is if leaders are born or made. True leaders might have natural abilities that lend themselves to taking charge over people, but some leaders are born out of necessity; they see a situation and take control over it. The Great Trait website discusses the idea that there is a leadership trait that determines a future leader. This view is countered in Daniel Maltby's article, "The State of Leadership Theory and Training Today", where he suggests that leaders are developed, not born. Even Colin Powell agrees with this view. Francis Yammarino sees no point in discerning whether a leader is born or made, and John Gardner is more concerned with the unrealistic expectations for the leader once in charge. Therefore, a leader is made, not born, because with the right opportunities and training, anyone can become a leader.

In ancient times, leaders were, in fact, born to the position. Leaders such as Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar were born into families who demanded that they would one day lead a nation. Others are born with the qualities necessary to become a great leader. Determining whether or not a leader is effective is the more difficult task. Some leaders suffer from the "halo effect", meaning that people follow them because of the position, not necessarily because they are qualified to do the job. The Trait theory of leadership implies that some traits are inborn and ensure leadership potential. According to Aristotle, "some men are born to lead, and others to be led." The qualities of a great leader can be narrowed down to the following: 1) Sociability: dependable, responsible,

active, socially participate, cooperative, popular; 2) Motivation: show initiative and persistence; and 3) Cognitive ability: intelligent, scholarly, insightful, verbal, adaptable (GreatTrait) Sociability and cognitive ability are traits one is born with, though they can be developed over time. A person often learns to be dependable and responsible early in life. One learns lessons in childhood that teach a person how to deal with other people and how to manage them. In regard to intelligence, every individual is born with a certain amount of cognitive ability, but each has the opportunity to develop those skills. Some will go to college and learn how to become a leader through classes and workshops; others will find themselves in situations where a leader is absent but necessary. Motivation, of course, is developed over time and is most often situational. One might be able to determine leadership ability early by watching young children and observing which are faced with a difficult task and set it aside, and which persist in completing the task, no matter how difficult. We can observe people for potential leadership qualities, such as the willingness to take on hard tasks and responsibility, and those who have the respect of their families and peers.

In Daniel Maltby's article, "The State of Leadership Theory and Training Today", he discusses the consensus by the majority of researchers, that certain situations lend themselves to creating leaders more than the qualities a person is born with. Clearly, he is in agreement that leaders are more likely made than born. He also suggests that there is not a definitive number of qualities that define a good leader; rather, there are a multitude of traits that, when developed, produce a good leader. These traits cannot exist in a vacuum. Instead, they are combined with opportunities for development, such as challenging assignments, mentoring programs and formal training programs...

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