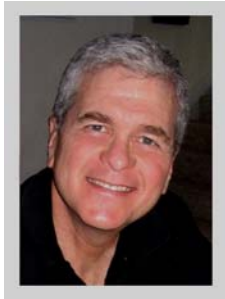


# The Best Ways to Identify and Develop Leaders



**By Leigh Branham**

(Adapted from guest column that appeared originally in THE KANSAS CITY STAR.)

Leadership is a critical issue for every organization because every organization needs leaders, and because leaders have potential for creating great harm or great good.

And yet, according to a recent Conference Board study, only a third of corporate officers believe their companies have the leaders they need to successfully pursue business opportunities. About the same percentage say they are effective at identifying future leaders.

On top of this unsettling news, we must also face up to the demographic situation the 35-to-44 age group from which most organizations typically select their leaders has declined by 18 percent over the last eight years. And there's one more thing we cannot ignore—the reality that leadership has become even more challenging with the constant acceleration of the pace of change, superheated competition, heightened pressure from boards and financial markets, and rising generations of workers who require more flexible and involving leadership styles.

Today's leaders not only need to be visionary strategic thinkers, quick decision-makers, skilled team builders and great communicators, they also need to bring a new mind-set about finding and keeping the right talent.

So the question is: What is your organization doing to identify and accelerate the development of the leaders who will take the reins when the boomer leaders really do begin to retire?

- Begin by defining the leadership competencies you will need to achieve results. Remember that different organizations require different leadership strengths at different times in their evolution.
- Instead of just asking managers to subjectively identify future leaders, conduct formal assessments of leader candidates against the leadership competencies you have identified.

FedEx requires all internal candidates for managerial positions to participate in what the company calls LEAP or Leadership Education and Assessment Program. Participants spend one day completing a battery of assessments and interviews, and another day listening to current managers discuss the day-

