

## The Five Levels of Leadership: Where Do You Rank?



## A COMPETENCY PERSPECTIVE

What makes a leader great? To answer that question, it helps to examine the great leaders you've known. Take a moment to reflect on the characteristics and behaviors of three remarkable leaders you've worked with in your career. Now, consider the opposite of these outstanding women and men: what characteristics and behaviors of bad leaders made working for them intolerable?

To amplify the difference, write down these attributes on a two-column list of great versus bad. What did you discover? In doing this exercise with thousands of professionals for more than a decade, think2perform has noted a consistent theme. Leaders are rarely valued for their IQs or their technical competency and expertise — often referred to as TQ.

The biggest gap between great leaders and poor ones is defined by characteristics related to EQ — known as emotional intelligence or emotional competency. This is not to say that IQ and TQ are irrelevant for leadership, they instead became threshold competencies. To become the type of leader others would list under the “great” column, one must expand their emotional competency at every stage of leadership and keep fine-tuning it throughout their career.

Using emotional intelligence to build a culture of leaders and a culture of leadership begins with an understanding of the five levels of leadership based on core competencies. These levels transcend role descriptions and job titles. Just because someone is a CEO does not automatically make them a level-five leader on this scale — these levels are earned through behaviors and actions. Examining these five levels of leadership allows you to assess your current level, and the levels of your team members, while also providing guideposts for progressing to higher levels.

## FIVE LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP

**Level One** – A level-one leader is a person who when given an assignment, gets the job done. They can be counted on to accomplish tasks they've been given.

**Level Two** – Level-two leaders consistently perform level-one responsibilities while enhancing their task-completion abilities by identifying problems and potential problems that may arise.

**Level Three** – A level-three leader is a person who goes beyond consistent performance of levels one and two in a valuable way. They not only identify problems, but also devise solutions to address them. Individuals operating at a level three resolve issues without the help of their leader or team.

**Level Four** – There is a big difference between level-three and level-four leadership. Level-four leaders build on of the first three levels with this important ability: level fours can mobilize a group of people around a common cause to drive a result consistently. Not only do these leaders identify a problem and devise a solution, but they also establish systems, implement processes and train the organization to eliminate the problem in the future.

**Level Five** – To reach a level five, individuals must consistently perform levels one through four while also advancing the organization. Level fives connect everything back to the vision, mission and values of the organization to infuse and energize teams with purpose. Operating from this organizational lens, level-five leaders take on the important role of identifying and developing individuals at a four-plus level. They are champions when it comes to creating a culture of leaders and a culture of leadership.

So how does emotional intelligence factor into these five levels? A person's EQ fuels their ability to reach higher levels of leadership and perform successfully at each new level. In some industries, level-one and level-two leaders can get by with merely intelligence (IQ) and technical competency (TQ). However, without emotional intelligence (EQ) when an individual tries to advance to level-three leadership or above, they will likely experience frustration and cause disruption to the organization.

No one dreams of being a bad leader. And it's certainly not a dream to work for one. Remember your bad leader examples? In most cases, these negative impacts could have been eliminated or at least minimized with leadership training focused on emotional intelligence. Emotionally intelligent leaders are able to skillfully deal with their own emotions and the emotions of others. They empower leaders and future leaders by knowing and understanding them. Emotionally intelligent leaders fuel productivity and engagement by connecting team members not only to the organization's mission, but also to a purpose worthy of their best efforts.

### **FOR FURTHER CONTACT**

If you're looking to reach a higher level of leadership, one built on the foundation of emotional intelligence, think2perform can help. Our Breakthrough Leadership program provides science-based strategies and strengths-building exercises to build your EQ and increase your leadership effectiveness.

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