

EXECUTIVE EDGE

“A” Player Human Capital Leadership by
HUNT EXECUTIVE SEARCH

Volume 17, Issue 1



For twenty-seven years, the Executive Edge has been a value added service to support our employers and candidates in their Personal & Professional Development.



Finding Future Leaders: Why Personality Matters

By Joe Hunt

The way we've chosen leaders over the last 50 years may not serve us well in coming decades. We used to be a manufacturing society, with leaders who excelled at processes that could be replicated, measured and improved. Operations were key to success, and leaders tended to be obsessive, "by the book," and conservative. They preserved order and maintained company values.

In contrast, 75% of today's employees provide services. They're knowledge workers who perform mental tasks instead of assembling product parts. Companies need leaders who can engage the workforce, manage people, and inspire collaboration and innovation.

Why Personality Type Matters

Freud pioneered our understanding of human nature with his classification of three personality types: erotic, obsessive and narcissistic. One of his students, psychologist Erich Fromm, added a fourth: the marketing personality.



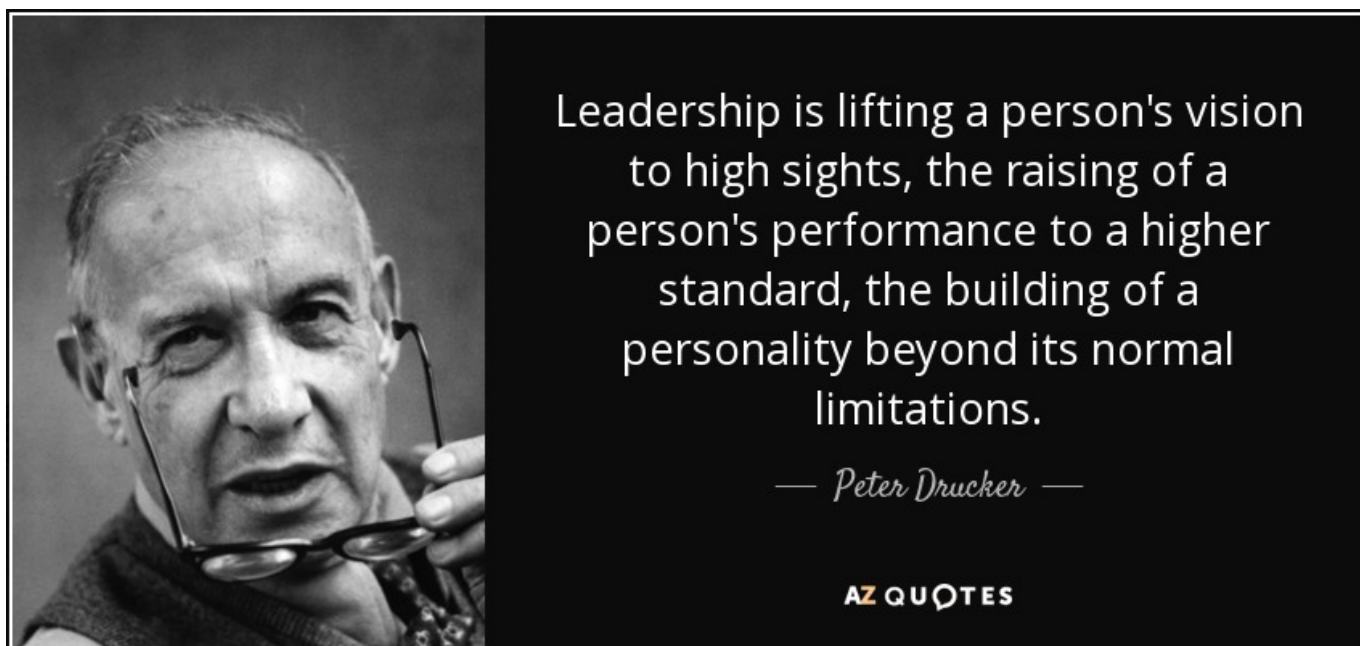
“*Erotics*” (not a sexual term) are driven by love, a need to care for others, and in return, be loved and appreciated. These individuals are relationship-oriented. Some management theorists call this personality type “enabling,” while others term it “amiable,” “diplomatic,” “supportive” or “compliant.”

Erotics are often found in education, social services and health care, but they exist in every field. When they are most productive, they bring people together, making connections and facilitating collaboration. The downside to this personality is codependency and indecisiveness.

“Obsessives” are driven by a need for security, consistency, rules and logical order. You’ll spot them in every field—especially government bureaucracies, engineering firms, and law and financial offices. As leaders, they focus on operations, details and numbers. They’re often called “analytical,” “detail oriented” or “numbers people.”

The problems associated with the obsessive personality type are well known:

- They become mired in details and rules.
- They lose sight of overall goals.
- They’re more concerned with doing things “the right way” than doing the right thing.
- They may become control freaks and/or micro-managers.
- They resist change to the point of obsolescence.
- They can be rigid, judgmental and cheap.
- They insist on being right.



The **“marketing personality”** describes people who, as the name implies, adapt to the market’s demands. They’re driven by the need to be accepted and fit into society. They sense what the market wants and needs, and they conform to it. They align themselves with key people, thrive on change and seek others’ approval.

Most of us adopt some of these aspects to survive in today’s volatile workplace. The biggest challenge with marketing types is their lack of a firm center and continual anxiety. They favor style over substance, spend a lot of energy selling themselves or chasing the next shiny thing, and may be incapable of fully committing to anything or anyone.

2 | EXECUTIVE EDGE

“A” Player human capital leadership by HUNT EXECUTIVE SEARCH

“Narcissists” are driven by the need to be unique, express their creativity and achieve greatness, and they’re readily spotted in leadership positions. The term carries a negative connotation, but it was originally meant to be descriptive (neither good nor bad). A narcissist can be productive (or not) and moral (or not).

We often misuse the term, applying it to leaders who are egocentric, greedy, self-aggrandizing, and of little benefit to their organizations and colleagues. A productive narcissist may be viewed as a visionary leader.

Narcissists’ need to achieve greatness override everything else. They seldom listen to others and often show little interest in their coworkers (except for those who can help them get what they want). Few social controls are built into their mental model of how the world works. They aren’t worried about conscience or losing others’ love or respect, and they don’t bend to peer pressure or what the public wants.

Productive Personality Types

All personality types have positive and negative potentials that can be described in terms of two hierarchies: productiveness and moral reasoning.

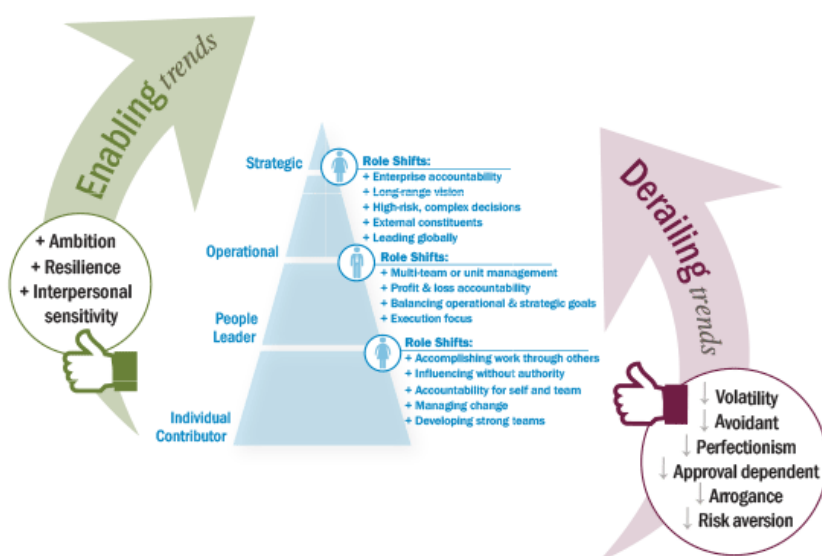
Productive vs. Nonproductive: Productive individuals are healthier than less developed, or even disturbed, personalities. A productive person is active and enthusiastic—someone who bounces back from failure and perseveres.

In contrast, unproductive people are less free and more reactive. They lack a clear purpose and are driven by addictive needs that make them fearful and dependent.

Moral Reasoning:

Higher levels of moral reasoning don’t guarantee that actions will always have their intended benefits; however, we want leaders who seek to achieve a common good, not just feather their own nests.

How Personality Patterns Differ Between Higher- and Lower-Level Leaders



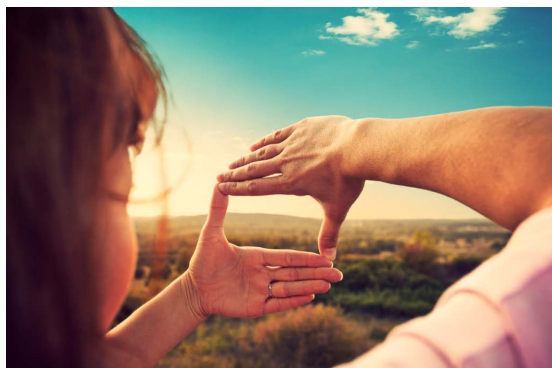
©Development Dimensions International, Inc., 2015. All rights reserved.

While morally developed people are almost always productive, there are active, enthusiastic, productive people who cut corners (or worse) and score poorly on the moral-reasoning scale.

Narcissistic or Visionary Leadership?

History and business have witnessed legions of successful, productive narcissists who led their organizations to great success: Napoleon, Rockefeller, Roosevelt and Churchill. In the last 20 years, we've enjoyed radical advances from companies led by productive narcissists like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Andy Grove, Howard Schultz, Richard Branson and Oprah Winfrey.

Many companies, even those known for innovation, don't want to hire narcissists who are visionary. No matter how much their leaders boast of encouraging independent thinking and creativity, many have little tolerance for true originals or mavericks.



Productive narcissists want to create new paradigms that change the way we live and work. Conversely, obsessive business leaders excel at cutting costs, culling non-performers from the pack, and implementing the right processes and systems.

At this time in history, we need creative energy and passion more than ever before. What differentiates the more successful visionary leaders from the failures (besides moral reasoning) is strategic intelligence, which is why leadership personality matters.

Leaders in charge of developing business strategies set priorities based on their personality type and innate drives. Selecting future leaders through assessment of leadership personality can help assure the right fit.

Our **LeaderShift Architect** tools include validated assessment instruments to help clients successfully apply the realm of personality and the associated behaviors to executive selection. While personality and behavior is not mutually inclusive or by itself an accurate predictor of success on the job, its mission critical for executives to better understand how it ties into people's ability to master leadership competencies and work effectively with others in all levels of management.

Joe Hunt is a Managing Partner at Hunt Executive Search/The Hunt Group, a boutique executive search firm that provides human capital solutions to consumer goods, retail, life sciences and diversified industrial markets.

Contact Joe Hunt:

212.861.2680 | 800.486.8476 | info@huntsearch.com

[Retained Executive Search](#)

[Executive Assessment](#)

[Private Equity Advisory](#)

[Executive Coaching & Outplacement](#)

[Human Capital Consulting eDossier](#)

[Video Presentation](#)



[Join Our Mailing List](#)

[Forward to a Friend](#)

[Stay Connected](#)

