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The knowledge attributes of leaders who get things done

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative research is to gain a deeper understanding of the knowledge attributes that influence how South African business leaders get things done. Knowledge is described as the social and emotional skills that allow leaders to enact behaviours. Therefore the components of the knowledge necessary for leaders to get things done are based on an understanding of their skills (learned capacity) and their abilities (the natural talents).

The research assessed the relative importance of knowledge and the relationship with personal traits and leadership behaviour through fifteen in-depth interviews. Knowledge was seen as relatively less important than personal traits and behaviours although it provides a crucial link between these leadership attributes. The importance of key knowledge attributes, including an awareness of the mechanisms to acquire knowledge, enable emerging leaders to be more effective and achieve sustained results. Therefore, the value of knowledge may be seen as the process of acquiring the body of information, concepts and principles required to lead and get things done.

KEY WORDS

Knowledge Acquisition, Leadership, Knowledge Attributes, Getting Things Done

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Ian Mortimer Sandilands

10th November 2010

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1. DEFINITION OF PROBLEM

1.1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this exploratory research is to gain a deeper understanding of the leadership attributes that influence how South African business leaders get things done.

1.2. INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years leadership has been studied and has been the fascination of academics and business people alike (Kotterman, 2006). Yet, despite all this research very little is known about the defining characteristics of effective leadership (Dulewicz, Young & Dulewicz, 2005). According to Goleman (2000), a leader's role cannot be underestimated in the performance of the organisation and he argues that the singular most important thing for any leader to do is get results.

Even though huge amounts of time and money have been invested in the search for the "holy grail" of leadership attributes, the quality of leadership throughout the world remains a cause for concern. The view is that once the "holy grail" of leadership attributes is found, these attributes could be articulated into a development framework for future leaders (Intagliata, Ulrich & Smallwood, 2000).

Researchers focusing on defining personal traits of effective leaders have concluded that it is not so much the traits as it is how individuals utilise these traits that matters. They have found personal traits to be excellent predictors of

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leadership emergence rather than leadership effectiveness (Boseman, 2008). Boseman (2008) defines the major leadership traits as intelligence, dominance, sociability, self monitoring, high energy and drive, self confidence and a tolerance for ambiguity. This suggests that those who display these traits are more likely to be perceived by others as leaders, but are not necessarily more effective leaders. However, people with these traits are generally considered for leadership roles.

In recent times the development of effective corporate leaders has concentrated on identifying and upgrading leadership attributes (Wood & Vilkinas, 2005). There are a large number of terms that define leadership attributes, but these can be categorised into three broad categories, namely who leaders ARE (values, motives, personal traits, character), what leaders KNOW (skills, abilities, competencies) and what leaders DO (behaviour, habits, styles) (Ulrich, Zenger, & Smallwood, 1999). Ulrich *et al.* (1999) argue that effective leadership is more than just having the appropriate leadership attributes. There is another dimension: results. Ulrich *et al.* (1999) state that effective leadership is dependent on both attributes and results and that leaders must strive for excellence in both through demonstrating attributes and achieving results.

Kets de Vries and Florent-Treacy (2002) suggest that effective leadership consists of a combination of personality, cognitive and behavioural factors. Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) posit that the study of leadership should be a framework that includes personality, cognitive, learning and behavioural factors. They also suggest that organisational context plays a role. Factors shaping

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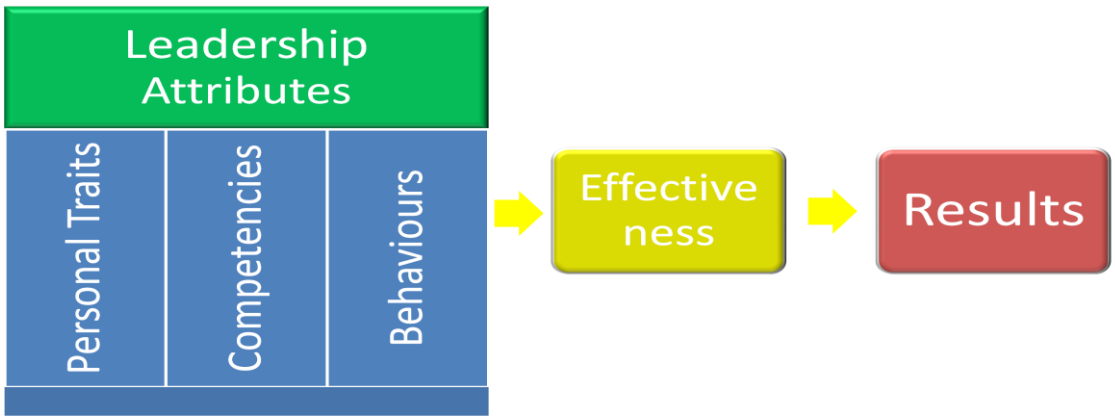
leadership include, strategy, culture, policies and practices and the ability to learn as an organisation.

Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) suggest that effective leadership is increasingly being seen in terms of a combination of:

- A range of personal characteristics which are required to enable an individual to engage in a leadership role in an effective manner.
- A range of skills and behaviours which need to be in place to provide effective leadership.
- A range of styles related to the context in which leadership is exercised.

The literature suggests that effective leadership can be defined in terms of who leaders ARE (values, motives, personal traits, character), what leaders KNOW (skills, abilities, competencies) and what leaders DO (behaviour, habits, styles) and the Initial Leadership Model has been developed to illustrate that a combination of leadership attributes can be seen to drive effectiveness and get things done.

Figure 1: Initial Leadership Model



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This project was deemed too large to be done by one researcher. As a result this research project is a collaborative project between Rashem Mothilal, Paul Deppe and Ian Sandilands. Each researcher will focus on one of the categories of the attributes that allow leaders to get things done. The author of this paper will focus on “what leaders KNOW”.

These categories of leadership attributes may be summarised as

- Who leaders ARE focuses on the personal traits and characteristics of leaders. Both historic and recent approaches to leadership have taken a trait perspective, which is supported by evidence showing consistent associations of specific traits with leadership emergence (Judge & Bono, 2000). It has been established that personal attributes and traits do influence leadership effectiveness.
- What leaders KNOW may be described as the social and emotional skills that allow leaders to enact behaviours (Groves, 2005). A review of the components of knowledge necessary for leaders to get things done requires an understanding of the skills (the learned capacity to achieve predetermined results) and the abilities (the natural talents that allow something to be done) (Doh, 2003).

  Ammons-Stephens, Cole, Jenkins, Riehle and Weare (2008) developed four central leadership meta-competencies: cognitive ability, vision, interpersonal effectiveness and managerial effectiveness. Competency frameworks seek to identify the knowledge requirements required to speed up the ability of organisations to get and sustain results. It is proposed that these skills and abilities can have a measureable impact on how leaders get things done.

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- What leaders DO implies the actions and engagement the leader has with the external environment and his or her followers. Therefore, the way the leader interacts with his or her followers and the way followers perceive the leader are important in this context. Reichwald, Siebert and Moslein (2005) suggest that personal, direct and leadership by interaction is the only way to influence and motivate people. Since leadership is about interacting with people, leadership values, behaviours and culture have a significant effect.

1.3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

According to Goleman (2000, p. 2), “The mystery of what leaders can and ought to do in order to spark the best performance from their people is age-old”. In order to focus on the impact of attributes on effective leadership, this study will use a sample of business leaders in South Africa. These business leaders are seen to get things done based on the achievement of sustained financial results in their businesses.

According to Zaccaro (2007), many research efforts focus their attention on small sets of individual differences that should predict leadership. Although other efforts do provide long lists of key leader attributes, they are rarely organised in a coherent and meaningful conceptual construction. Furthermore, studies rarely consider how the joint combination of particular leader characteristics influences leadership behaviour and effectiveness (Yukl, 2006; Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader, 2004). According to Zaccaro (2007), it is likely that leader attributes exhibit complex, multiplicative and curvilinear relationships with leadership outcomes.

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This combined study seeks to address these limitations. Each business leader interviewed will be asked to assess the key leadership attributes that enabled their success. These leadership attributes will be assessed in terms of personal traits (who they ARE), competencies (what they KNOW) and behaviours (what they DO). The relationship between these three leadership attribute categories will be analysed and packaged using the Leadership Model. This particular study will focus on the knowledge attributes of leaders who get things done, including the relative importance of these attributes compared to personal traits and behaviours.

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2. THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. LEADERSHIP DEFINITION

Despite significant contributions to the theory and practice of leadership, there is no consistently agreed definition of leadership performance (Yukl, 2006). Leadership has been described as a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task (Chemers, 2002). Kotter (1990) argues that leadership and management are complimentary systems of action required to be successful in today's business environment. He argues that management is about coping with complexity while leadership is about coping with change.

Probably the most comprehensive and inclusive definition of leadership is the definition postulated by Winston and Patterson (2005, p. 4), "A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization's mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives." Therefore leadership may be seen as the quality to achieve desired results by giving direction to the organisation (Giri & Santra, 2010). Although most management academics agree that leadership is both a skill and a behaviour that exhibits that skill (Doh, 2003), the concept of leadership is continually changing and thus a comprehensive definition is elusive.

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2.2. LEADERSHIP THEORY

In attempting to understand the nature of leadership, it is necessary to discuss the different theories of leadership that have developed over time. Traditional leadership theory was based on trait theory and this evolved into behavioural and contingency approaches. More recent leadership theory, the neo-charismatic theories, have emerged, and focus on how leaders demonstrate or act out behaviour that is emotionally appealing and symbolic. The neo-charismatic theories include transactional leadership theory, transformational leadership theory and full-range leadership theory (Robbins, 2003).

2.2.1. TRAIT THEORY

Trait theory represented the first systematic effort in the study of leadership. The trait perspective was based on an early psychological focus that argued that people were born with inherited traits or characteristics (Yukl, 2006). The focus was on studying successful leaders so that those traits could be identified. Once the traits were identified, it was assumed that people with similar traits could also become great leaders (Yukl, 2006).

Trait theory is therefore about the qualities in a leader that are either inherited or based on some personal attribute that can be developed over time. Trait theory, however, did not completely satisfy the leadership debate, which subsequently led to the development of behavioural leadership theory (Robbins, 2003).

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2.2.2. BEHAVIOURAL THEORY

The next major shift in leadership research examined the types of behaviours leaders exhibited in an effort to assess what leaders do to be effective. This focus on a leader's action was different from the trait approach which centred on a person's physical and personality characteristics. Researchers determined that leadership is composed essentially of two kinds of behaviours: task behaviours and relationship behaviours (Northouse, 2004). The behaviour approach attempted to explain how these two types of behaviours interface in a manner that allowed a leader to influence a group to reach a goal. The main behavioural models are McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, the Ohio State and University of Michigan Models, and the Managerial Grid Model of Blake and Mouton.

2.2.3. CONTINGENCY THEORY

Contingency theory refers to the different management theories developed concurrently in the late 1960s. Contingency theorists argued that previous theories had failed because they neglected the fact that management style and organisational structure were influenced by various aspects of the environment, namely contingency factors (Robbins, 2003). These new theories focused on the contextual factors that influenced the best style of leadership: they were concerned with styles and situations and not necessarily with the level of leadership (Northouse, 2004).

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Several approaches were developed that attempted to determine the contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of the interaction between leader and follower. The main contingency models are the Leadership Continuum of Tannenbaum and Schmidt, Fielders Contingency Model, Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model, House's Path-Goal Model and the Leader-Member Exchange theory (Bass, 1990).

The contingency approach suggests that no single leadership style applies to all situations. Situational leadership does not promote an ideal leadership style, but rather considers the ability of a leader to adapt to the environment (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). The contingency approach represented a shift in leadership research from focusing on the leader to looking at the leader in conjunction with the situation in which the leader works (Fielder, 1978).

2.2.4. NEOCHARISMATIC THEORIES

As can be seen from the previous sections, the trait, behaviour and contingency approaches do not agree on how leaders can best influence followers. As a result a category of new approaches, termed neocharismatic theories, emerged in the 1990s. According to Robbins (2003), the neocharismatic theories of leadership focus on the leader's ability to demonstrate or act out behaviour that is emotionally appealing and symbolic.

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2.2.4.1. TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Bass (1990) referred to transactional leadership as an exchange relationship between leader and follower. Bass and Avolio (1997) described transactional leadership in terms of two characteristics: the use of contingent rewards and management by exception. Transactional leaders are able to entice subordinates to perform and thereby achieve desired outcomes by promising them rewards and benefits for the accomplishment of tasks (Bass, 1990).

Transactional leaders are suited to a more stable business environment with little competition, as characterised by the business arena prior to the 1980s (Tichy & Devanna, 1990). However, the current competitive business environment requires a new style of leadership in order to ensure the organisations survival and performance, namely transformational leadership.

2.2.4.2. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Transformational leadership is part of the neocharismatic paradigm that focuses on the charismatic and affective elements of leadership (Northouse, 2004). It is a process that changes and transforms subordinates to engage in performance beyond expectations (Bass & Avolio, 1997). Transformational leaders raise followers' propensity to extend greater effort in at least three ways. Firstly, they raise awareness about the importance of certain goals and means for their attainment. Secondly, they induce followers to transcend their self-interest for the goods of the organisation. And lastly, they stimulate and satisfy higher-order needs, such as self-esteem and self-actualisation (Bryman, 1992).

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Transformational leadership is thus believed to inspire, energise, and intellectually stimulate followers. Transformational leadership extends transactional leadership to attain higher levels of subordinate performance, but achieves this addition by utilising various motivational methods and diverse types of objectives and goals (Bass, 1990).

2.2.4.3. FULL-RANGE LEADERSHIP

The Full-Range Leadership approach developed by Bass and Avolio (1997) integrates the trait, functional and situational theories as well as the skills, attitudes and behaviours that support different organisational leadership needs. This model identifies seven leadership factors which are grouped as either a transactional, transformational or laissez-faire style of leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1997).

2.3. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP KNOWLEDGE

This assessment of the theory and literature associated with the knowledge attributes of leaders is set against the backdrop of leadership theory. Ulrich *et al.* (1999) state that effective leadership is dependent on both results and attributes. These attributes are the inner and personal qualities that constitute effective leadership. Thus an understanding of the knowledge attributes that will deliver results is required. These attributes need to manage the constraints of existing mental models in the changing modern world. The limitations of social and contextual filters, in combination with limited self-awareness, require

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leaders to learn how to access the full spectrum of data and opinion (Pinos, Twigg, Parayitam & Olson, 2006).

Therefore we may conclude that knowledge attributes refer to the quality aspects of knowledge. These are a measure of the importance, applicability of practicality of the knowledge in terms of situation which faces a leader. Knowledge is defined as the body of information, concepts and principles required to perform a function (Groves, 2005). A review of the components of knowledge necessary for leaders to get things done requires an understanding of the skills (the learned capacity to achieve predetermined results) and the abilities (the natural talents that allow something to be done) (Doh, 2003).

Given that the capacity to apply knowledge may be based on the natural talent (ability) and acquired competence (skills) of leaders, Kets de Vries and Florent-Treacy (2002) suggest that effective leadership is characterised by a combination of personality, cognitive and behavioural factors. Therefore, what leaders KNOW may be described as the social and emotional skills that allow leaders to enact behaviours (Groves, 2005).

This is reflected in the importance of top management teams' skills which have a direct impact on performance (Carmeli & Tishler, 2006). This includes the skill required to manage changing world filters and develop the insight to identify problems and be proactive in taking action to address these (Pinos *et al*., 2006). The ability to observe events and be responsive is based on the depth of a leader's communication skills (Brittain, Swain & Simpson, 2005). These skills may require additional support through coaching and mentorship interventions.

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This combination of management skills and communication skills are key areas of focus in the training and development of leaders (McCrimmon, 2009).

2.4. THE KNOWLEDGE ATTRIBUTES OF LEADERS

The knowledge attributes of business leaders may be grouped into four primary categories: the ability to translate strategy into organisational capability; the capability to mobilise individual commitment, the ability to demonstrate personal character; and a focus on self-development.

2.4.1. THE ABILITY TO TRANSLATE STRATEGY IN ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY

Bossidy and Charan (2002) identified execution as the missing element in translating strategy into organisational capability. Lack of execution explained why the gap between strategic plans and their outcomes often fell short of the planner's ambitions. They proposed an approach that links strategy, operations and people processes in achieving effective results. This ability to translate strategy into organisational capability is seen as a key leadership attribute. Successful strategic execution relies on the ability to articulate the strategy, create business value through the delivery of results and elements of innovation and creativity.

Kets de Vries, Vrignaud and Florent-Treacy (2004) argue that leaders need to create value through building commitment to the organisation's vision, mission and strategies. A superior understanding of the dynamic engagement process between leaders and followers will drive superior organisational performance.

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Kotter (1990) argues that leadership and management are complementary systems of action required to be successful in the business environment. He posits that management is about coping with complexity while leadership is about coping with change. This implies that leaders create or alter organisations by challenging the status quo. They create and communicate a vision that gets people to believe in the change and then empower them to act. Vogelgesang and Lester (2009) argue that organisations should seek innovation and continually review current practices to become better.

Collins (2001) proposes five levels of leadership which allow highly capable individuals (level 1) to develop into executives who deliver extraordinary results without taking excessive credit for those results (level 5). In this model, highly capable individuals (level 1) are seen to develop team skills (level 2), managerial competence (level 3) and leadership attributes (level 4) during a career. Ultimately a few of these leaders can become executives who are able to build enduring greatness. Level 5 leaders rely on a culture of discipline is built on inspired standards which allow for individual freedom and responsibility.

Therefore it appears that aspiring leaders need to demonstrate different characteristics in order to get things done and that these leadership competencies vary at different levels and in different ways. Furthermore, Goleman (2000) defines a leader's primary role as one that gets results and proposes that the most effective leaders are those who are able to switch between different leadership styles flexibly as needed.

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2.4.2. THE CAPABILITY TO MOBILISE INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENT

Successful leaders require engaged followers. This key leadership attribute demands more than setting a direction. People will follow when they understand the goal and their role in achieving, as well through encouragement and recognition. The capability to mobilise individuals is based on getting their commitment which depends on effective communication, team inclusiveness and business acumen.

The need to mobilise individual commitment through interpersonal skills and effective relationships is well established (Bossidy, 2002; Hersey & Blanchard, 1998). These interpersonal skills may be enhanced through the ongoing investment in employees at all levels (Tichy, 1997). Brittain *et al.* (2005) propose that leaders can accelerate strategic implementation through the active communication of what needs to change and what they can expect to happen. Leaders can engage followers in shared meaning based on a distinctive and compelling story.

Brittain *et al.* (2005) support the view that knowledgeable leadership is required for successful organisational transformation. They conclude that effective leadership of change can generate remarkable levels of productive energy within the organization. Effective leadership can be developed by personally conveying the story (defining success), by being an active role model in achieving results (show success), and by investing in leadership throughout the company (ensuring sustained success).

Tichy (1997) proposes that companies who nurture the development of leaders at all levels in the organisation will be more successful. Social skill allows

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emotional intelligence to work. Leadership development initiatives to build the skills, actions and behaviours required for executive storytelling, large groups learning forums and action learning can enhance the ability of leaders to get things done. This can unleash productive energy across the organization and provide opportunities to see the next generation of leaders in action (Brittain *et al*., 2005; Tichy. 1997).

2.4.3. THE ABILITY TO DEMONSTRATE PERSONAL CHARACTER

Vogelgesang and Lester (2009) found that transparency has yet to be operationalised by specific behaviours that can be applied to leadership development. The requirement for transparency is driven by the convergence of accountability requirements in terms of ethical corporate governance and sustainability reporting. This has subsequently been expanded from a pure environmental focus to include social and financial issues. The perception is that transparency will improve organisational outcomes though less deviant behaviour is based on increased trust, engagement and performance levels (Kolk, 2008: Vogelgesang and Lester, 2009).

A leader's performance also requires greater resilience in facing and understanding the world which can be translated into individuals and organisations to make meaning of hardship and improvising solutions (Coutu, 2002). It is evident that solving problems is important in preventing mistakes from compounding over time (Vogelgesang and Lester, 2009). However finding problems before they trigger a chain of events is even more advantageous.

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Observation can negate preconceptions, especially when collected under different circumstances and from varied perspectives (Brittain *et al.,* 2005).

2.4.4. A FOCUS ON SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Heifetz and Linsky (2002) refer to the intense experiences that shape leaders and often become the source of their distinctive leadership abilities. Bennis and Thomas (2002) refer to these experiences as crucibles. These may take many forms but are typically transformative experiences which require a profound examination of the individual's values, assumptions and judgment. This deep self-reflection alters the individual's sense of being in some way. These leadership antecedents are not necessarily traumatic and may be tipping points driven by a positive personal response to a significant challenge involving individuals, social instructions or life experiences (Toor & Ofiri, 2008).

Collins (2001) proposes that significant life experiences may unlock the potential to rise to Level 5 Leadership where genuine personal humility blends with intense professional will. Toor *et al.* (2008) identify that teachers, parents and mentors are significant in the development of leadership among emergent leaders and note that educational and occupational experiences play a central role in leadership development. Bennis *et al.* (2002) define the importance of a person surviving the event and learning from this process to become stronger, more engaged and more committed.

Cross, Vertucci, Cowen and Thomas (2009) illustrate how the importance of personal networks can be in extending the individual competencies of high-flying leaders. They suggest that results can be achieved by improving both the

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size and the quality of their personal networks. As globalisation forces individuals and organisations to review the social norms, effective networking could provide a competitive edge (Cross *et al.*, 2009).

2.5. CAN LEADERSHIP BE TAUGHT?

Steve Strumph suggests that: "…if leaders are born not made – and if no one can teach anyone else to improve – let's start investigating leadership in the biology lab rather than in the business world" (cited in Doh, 2003, p. 55). Significant leadership qualities can be successfully taught through training and education (Elmuti, Minnis & Abebe, 2005). However the complexity of the definition of leadership and the challenge of agreeing how to learn the skills required to lead, have resulted in numerous competency models and frameworks. (Doh, 2003; Elmuti *et al.*, 2005; Longnecker, 2007). Therefore a review of a leader's willingness to learn and the existence of an appropriate competency model appear to be crucial in developing the knowledge attributes of leaders who get things done.

Boyce, Zaccaro and Wisecarver (2010) propose that an understanding of the cognitive, dispositional and motivational drivers of the willingness to engage in leadership self-development may align organisational and individual development focus. Elmuti *et al.* (2005) suggest that a holistic educational approach that seeks to expand theoretical preparation through rigorous conceptual and analytical training is required. The current trends are to include a multi-disciplinary, ethically integrated education with a global perspective (Doh, 2003). Carmeli *et al.* (2006) conclude that the managerial skills of the top management team strongly impact organisational performance and the skills to

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manage people, in particular, are found to be more important than intellectual ability.

Goleman (2000) offers a clear, research based explanation of the emotional and social competencies of effective leadership. His concept of Emotional Intelligence identified five skills that enable the best leaders to maximise their own performance, as well as their follower's performance. These skills include self-awareness (knowing one's strengths, weaknesses, drives, values and impact on others); self-regulation (controlling or redirecting disruptive impulses or moods); motivation (relishing achievement for its own sake); empathy (understanding other people's emotional makeup): and social skill (building rapport with others to move them in desired directions) (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2005).

Goleman (2000) challenges traditional leadership qualities such as intelligence, toughness, determination and vision. He argues that they are insufficient and proposes that emotional intelligence can be learnt. Collins (2001) describes level 5 leaders as individuals who produce extraordinary results without taking excessive credit for those results. This raises the interesting complexity that the animus and personal ambition that drive people to level 4 conflicts with the humility required to rise to Level 5 Leadership. Collins (2001) suggests that leaders with the potential can develop the emotional and social competencies required to address this complexity.

There is a trend towards building leadership knowledge through building the competencies to identify, grow and advance leaders (Coutu, 2002). However it is sometimes "ironic that top management devotes so much attention to the

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capital budgeting process yet typically has no comparable mechanism for allocating the human skills that embody core competencies." (Prahalad and Hamel, cited in Ammons-Stephens *et al.*, 2008, p. 7). There is no agreement on the success of developing competency models although they can provide a powerful tool for assessing performance and can give a common language to leadership development discussions (Robertson, Callinan & Bartram, 2002). Alternatively the case for using experience, mentorship and coaching to develop competence implies a more holistic approach to developing leadership knowledge. This suggests that a combination of resilience and perseverance built on experience needs to be balanced by the development of emotional and social competence based on development interventions can have a measureable impact on how leaders get things done (Brittain *et al.*, 2005; Cross *et al.*, (2009); Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009).

Giri and Santra (2006) argue that a leader's performance is impacted by age, experience and position. Further, individuals in middle career stage are seen to be more productive and this is attributed to these individuals having gained vital experience but who are yet to attain certain goals. Athansaw (2003) established that the impact of tenure, age and experience were found to have positive and significant influence on leadership styles. However Kets de Vries *et al.* (2004) were not able to determine an age effect in their comparison of MBA candidates and executive managers but were able to clearly identify the effect of experience between these groups.

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2.6. CONCLUSION

Elmuti *et al.* (2005) propose that leaders are generally responsible for overall organisational effectiveness. The evolution of neo-charismatic leadership theories, as well as elements of trait, behavioural and contingency approaches to leadership, are based on attempts to gain insight into the skills and behaviours required to lead (Robbins, 2003). Therefore the value of knowledge appears to be founded on interventions that speed up the ability of leaders to get results as organisations strive to survive and grow in an increasingly competitive global market.

Given this background there has been continuous debate about whether leadership can be taught (Doh, 2003). Collins (2001) defines the concept of Level 5 Leadership but argues that attempts to provide a simplistic formula to achieve this would trivialise the notion. He proposes that the seed of Level 5 Leadership is widely dispersed throughout society and that it can be identified, cultivated and developed. However the twin challenges of defining the leadership knowledge required and identifying the activities that unlock these leadership skills remain.

The knowledge attributes of leaders requires insight into the skills, abilities, competencies that enable them thrive and sustain performance. These attributes may have been developed through experience, formal academic qualification, training or self-insight. The intention of this research is to investigate the crucial incidents that led to the development of key knowledge attributes that influence how successful South African business leaders get things done.

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3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this exploratory research is to gain a deeper understanding of the leadership attributes that influence how South African business leaders get things done. Leadership attributes can be categorized into three broad categories, namely who leaders ARE (values, motives, personal traits, character), what leaders KNOW (skills, abilities, competencies) and what leaders DO (behaviour, habits, styles). Each researcher will focus on one of these categories as indicated in italics below.

- What values, motives and personal traits are associated with leaders who get things done? *(to be researched by R Mothilal)*
- What knowledge, skills, and abilities are associated with leaders who get things done? *(to be researched by I Sandilands)*
- What behaviours, habits, styles and competencies are associated with leaders who get things done? *(to be researched by P Deppe)*
- Which leadership attributes are the most important determinants in how leaders get things done? *(to be researched by R Mothilal, I Sandilands and P Deppe)*

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4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1. RESEARCH METHOD

The research design was qualitative and exploratory in nature and was conducted using semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research seeks to gather insights into human behaviour and explain relationships (Robson, 2002). According to Zikmund (2003), exploratory research provides greater understanding of a concept or crystallises a problem. The focus of such qualitative research is not on numbers but on words and observations. Zikmund (2003) goes on to state that there are three interrelated purposes for exploratory research: (1) diagnosing a situation, (2) screening alternatives, and (3) discovering new ideas. The purpose of this study is to discover new ideas and insights about how leaders get things done.

Qualitative research is effective in clarifying the complex, hidden and subconscious structures of leadership phenomena (Conger, 1998). When properly employed, qualitative methods offer researchers of leadership the following advantages over quantitative research (Bryman, 1992):

- More opportunities to explore leadership phenomena in significant depth, and to do so longitudinally;
- More effective means to investigate symbolic dimensions;
- The flexibility to detect and discern unexpected phenomena during the research.

An exploratory study lends itself to the emergent nature of qualitative research as it is not a linear, objective process that can be easily captured by means of

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an impersonal questionnaire (Merriam, 1998). In order to understand the influence of attributes on leadership effectiveness, the most appropriate research methodology is arguably a qualitative, exploratory study. The exploratory research technique that was used in this study was intensive, in-depth questioning of business leaders to provide richness and depth of data.

Semi-structured interviews were used as they are useful as an exploratory technique (Gillham, 2005). Semi-structured interviews start with a list of themes and questions that will be covered in the interview. During the interview and given the organisational context, some questions were omitted and the order of questions varied. Additional questions were required to explore the research question and objectives depending on the situation (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed the leader to give meaning to what influences his/her ability to get things done without being limited by specific questions. Probing open-ended questions were asked at the end of the narrative in an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the specific attributes that enable the leader to get things done (Gilham, 2005). The sessions were recorded using a dictaphone and then transcribed and analysed for emerging themes using qualitative techniques. The interview was preceded by a pre-interview letter and succeeded by a post-interview thank you letter.

4.2. POPULATION AND UNIT OF ANALYSIS

Zikmund (2003, p. 369) defines the population (universe) as “a complete group of entities sharing some common set of characteristics.” In this case, the population was South African business leaders who are leading large organisations or large divisions within the organisations. The researchers

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sourced all interviews with leaders from companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). The unit of analysis was the individual business leader who was interviewed.

4.3. SIZE AND NATURE OF SAMPLE

Each researcher conducted five in-depth exploratory interviews with selected business leaders, to explore the influence of all three categories of attributes on the leader's ability to get things done. The data from a total of fifteen combined interviews was then collated and presented to each researcher who then separately analyzed the data relevant to their assigned leadership attribute.

The research was based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with successful South African business leaders. The researchers attempted to target interviewees who had experience at executive and board level. The interviewee could be from any industry sector in South Africa. The sample did include a mixture of white and black business leaders. However, the sample does not accurately reflect demographically representative proportions.

The research was conducted in two phases as described below:

Phase 1 - A nomination process in the GIBS MBA 2009/10 class to generate a list of South African business leaders. A judgement sample was then used as a sample pool for the research. According to Zikmund (2003), judgement sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which experienced individuals select the sample based on their judgement about an appropriate characteristic required of the sample members. In this case

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each student was asked to nominate three business leaders that met the following criteria:

- Business leader within a JSE-listed company
- Minimum of 3 years in an executive management position
- At least a 3 year track record of "getting things done"

In the context of this research the leader who “gets things done” is defined as someone who has achieved sustained financial results over a period of time, at least three years. The opinions of students were collated and sorted. An attempt was made to interview those leaders with the highest number of nominations. 204 students were canvassed and only 21 (10%) responded. From the 29 leaders nominated five were nominated more than once.

Phase 2 - Since it was difficult to find business leaders who were available and willing to take part in an in-depth study of this nature, a non-probability convenience sampling method was used in order to gain access to shortlisted candidates. Saunders *et al.* (2007) define convenience sampling as a non-probability sampling procedure in which cases are selected haphazardly on the basis that they are easy to obtain.

4.4. DATA COLLECTION, DATA ANALYSIS AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Data analysis in qualitative research is likened to a metamorphosis where the researcher retreats with the data, applies his analytic powers and finally emerges with the findings. The process is highly intuitive and it is not always possible to locate the source of an insight (Merriam, 1998). The analytical

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methods used in this study were a combination of narrative analysis, constant comparative analysis and content analysis. These methods were combined as required as there is no correct way of performing analysis in a qualitative study, except for the constraint that it needs to be an interactive process, running parallel to the data collection phase (Daft, 1983; Cresswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). A constant sum scale was used to determine the relative importance of personal traits (who leaders ARE), competencies (what leaders KNOW) and behaviours (what leaders DO).

Qualitative research needs to convince the reader that the study makes sense, unlike quantitative research that has to convince the reader that procedures have been followed faithfully (Merriam, 1998). Questionnaire design and wording are critical. It is important that the use of questionnaires does not pre-empt the “open-ended” nature of the qualitative interview, and the opportunity for exploratory unstructured responses remains (McCracken, 1988). However, the interviewer must be able to take full advantage of the interview and pursue any opportunity that may present itself. The questionnaire must not be able to destroy the element of freedom and variability within the interview (McCracken, 1988). Pre-testing was used to revise the questionnaire, assist screen out issues related to the design, and provide the interviewer with the opportunity to rehearse. Furthermore, interview guidelines were drafted to offset the limitations of interview bias.

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4.5. POTENTIAL RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Potential limitations of this study are interviewer and response bias. Interviewer bias is where the comments, tone or non verbal behaviour of the interviewer creates bias in the way that respondents respond to questions. Response bias occurs where respondents may be sensitive to certain themes and therefore choose not to reveal and discuss certain topics which the interviewer may wish to explore (Saunders *et al.*, 2007).

The time-consuming requirements of the interview process may also result in a reduction in willingness of the respondent to take part. A convenience sampling procedure was used and therefore caution must be exercised when projecting the results of this study beyond the specific sample (Saunders *et al.*, 2007; Zikmund, 2003).

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5. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The results presented reflect the outcomes of fifteen interviews with South African business leaders during August and September 2010. A list of the interviewees can be viewed in Appendix A. These in-depth, exploratory interviews were conducted on a semi-structured basis with open-ended questions. Each interview was preceded with a pre-interview letter (Appendix B). The interview guideline was structured into three sections with twelve open-ended questions (Appendix C). A post interview letter was sent after each interview (Appendix D).

On completion of all the interviews, transcriptions were drafted based on the voice recordings of the interviews. These interviews were then coded in an excel spreadsheet in order to extract the knowledge themes from the responses provided by the respondents during the interviews.

The results are presented in these knowledge themes. The themes have been grouped into three categories: the value of knowledge; the acquisition of knowledge; and the key knowledge attributes of leaders. Each theme has a short description, as well as the percentage of respondents who referred to the theme and the number of responses. A complete table of the knowledge themes and associated responses is included in Appendix E. Selected quotations have been included in the presentation of results.

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5.1. INTRODUCTION

The majority of respondents were males with only one female interviewed. Three respondents were black and twelve were white. The age of the respondents ranged from 40 years old to 77 years old. The demographics of these respondents can be seen in the graphs below:

Figure 2: Gender and Race Profile of the Leaders Interviewed

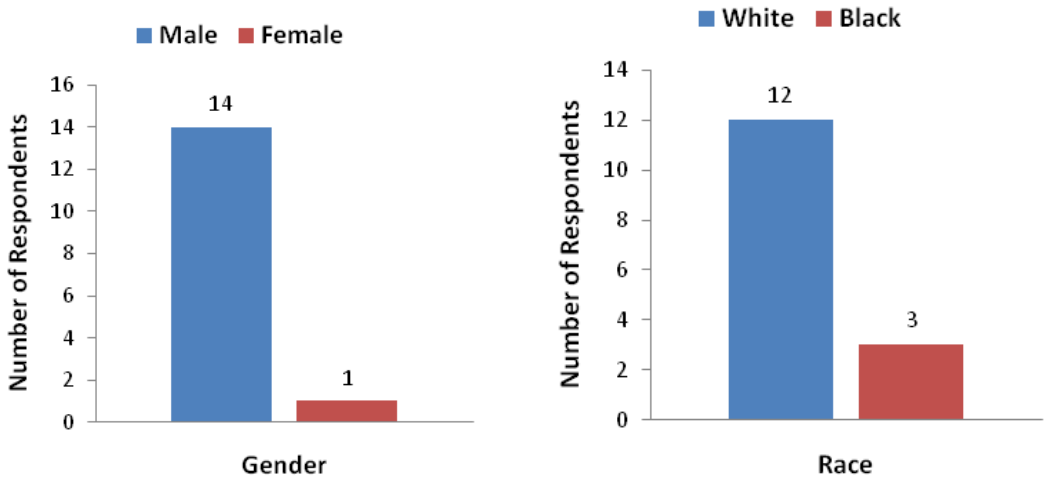
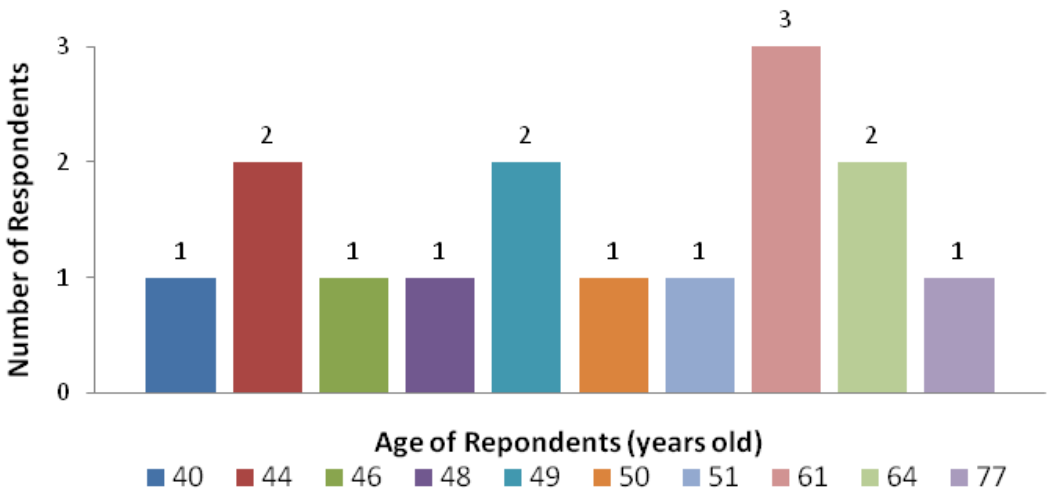


Figure 3: Age Profile of the Leaders Interviewed



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All the respondents hold senior leadership roles within their respective organisations. Currently seven of the respondents are the company CEO, while three are directors of companies who previously held the CEO position in large listed companies for extended periods. The remaining five individuals have various roles as can be seen in the table below.

Table 1: Current Position of the Leaders Interviewed

Current Position	Number of Respondents
CEO	7
Director of Companies	3
Group Legal Advisor	1
Chairman	1
Group Executive Director	1
MD	1
Executive Coach	1

The respondents represent a cross section of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). Sectors represented include media, mining, construction, manufacturing, pharmaceutical and banking. Three of the respondents hold executive roles within a large division of a listed company. This width of industry representation is also reflected in the range of age. However this sample does not represent the demographic profile of South African business leaders. In all cases the leaders interviewed were experienced at executive and board level. On average the interviewees had spent over 14 years each in executive management positions.

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5.2. DATA ANALYSIS

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The analysis of the transcripts of each interview was completed using the analysis technique outlined below. Initially all the transcripts were read through to understand the context and meaning each of the respondents were articulating. Once a clear understanding of the interview content was established, the transcripts were analyzed using a combination of content and thematic analysis.

An excel spread sheet was used to capture the data. Each theme was listed in the left hand column and the second column was used for more detailed topics arising from each question. The verbatim information from each respondent was entered with each respondent having a unique column. The verbatim responses were matched to the relevant theme which enabled a comparison across respondents per theme.

The knowledge themes were grouped into the categories: the value of knowledge, the acquisition of knowledge, and key leadership skills. In certain cases lengthy responses which included a number of points were split into two where appropriate. The percentage of respondents who commented on each theme was calculated. In addition, the number of verbatim comments (responses) related to the theme was calculated. Finally as assessment of the relative importance of leadership attributes was completed.

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5.3. THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

Respondents were all given the opportunity to provide a weighting to the three leadership attributes in relation to how influential these attributes are to them in getting things done. Although views varied greatly among the respondents, there was a constant in as much as the KNOW was weighted as being less important for nearly all the leaders.

Calculation of a basic average for each of the attributes revealed that the weightings for the ARE and the DO attributes is equal with 38% each. The KNOW has lesser weighting of 24% from these leaders. One respondent did however place a higher weighting on the KNOW attribute than the other attributes with the KNOW being at 40%, and ARE and DO both being at 30% for this leader. Two candidates spilt their responses equally across all three leadership attributes.

Figure 4: Average Weightings for Characteristics of Leaders

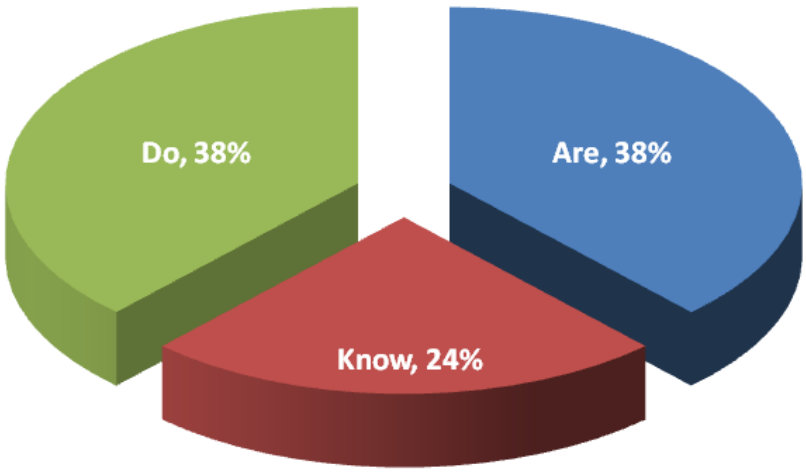

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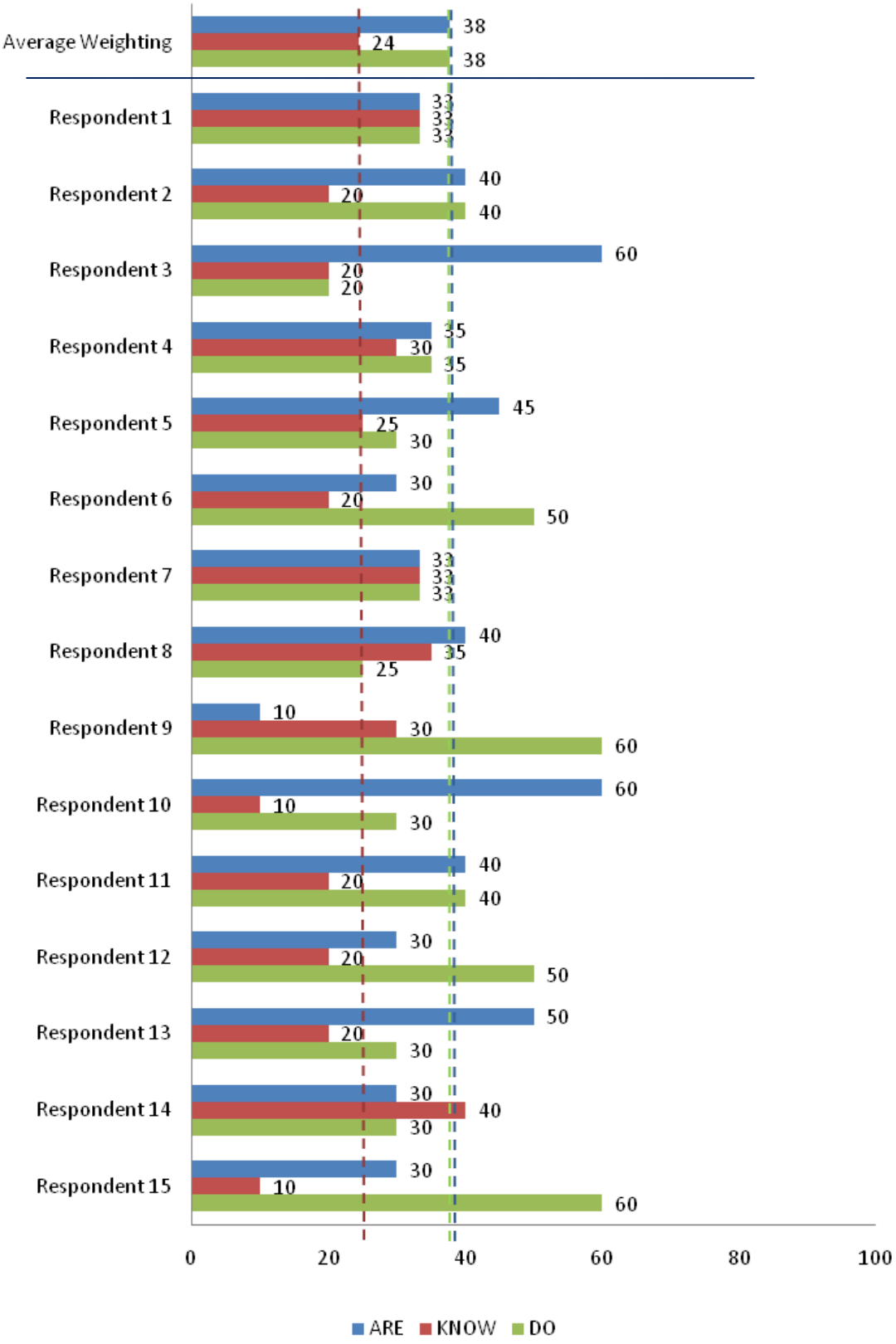
Figure 5: Weightings for Characteristics by Leader Interviewed



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5.4. KNOWLEDGE THEMES

The knowledge themes have been grouped in three categories. There include a number of sub-categories.

- The value of knowledge
- The acquisition of knowledge
  - Knowledge acquired through experience
  - Knowledge acquired through academic qualification
  - Knowledge acquired through continuous learning
  - Knowledge acquired through mentorship
- Key knowledge attributes of leaders
  - Emotional competence
  - Social competence
  - Communication skills
  - Business acumen

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5.5. THE VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE

General statements and comments made relating to the overall importance and value of basic leadership knowledge (skills, behaviour and relationships).

Percentage Response to Theme: 93% (14/15 respondents)

Number of Responses Related to the Theme: 25

Selected Quotations

- It can be argued that someone whose experience of life gives rise to a level of understanding that makes them more credible as a leader
- I have to subscribe to the 'it can be taught' because I think of myself as somebody who learnt to be a leader
- I don't think you are born a leader ... I think what happens is that your early development shapes you
- Academic background is important but your breadth of knowledge and how well read you are crucial leadership ingredients
- Leaders need to define and execute business strategy through aligning their people
- I still believe that the classic Anglo Saxon thing of a broad education followed by specialization gives you first prize
- One of the things you learn is that no-one who knows everything and therefore in the right context everyone can be a reasonably good leader
- Organisations I think need different people at different phases of their development but the leadership skill is business strategy
- I think it is sort of a cliché but you don't hire for skill, you hire for attitude and then you train for skills
- Leadership development is not as important as personal traits
- Leaders need good processing capabilities that allow their experience and knowledge to be applied to developing a solution very quickly
- A key leadership strength is the ability to connect the dots and find links that weren't necessarily obvious
- I am able to analyse options quite well and I am not thrown by the number of options or opinions
- Leaders need to deliver, and this often a question of judgement, based your ability to understand issues and all your experience
- I think I have done better out of my knowledge as opposed to what I am ... I think it has got me ahead, initially, and I think I have taken advantage of that
- If you don't have the academic background, you tend to be more reliant on other people and develop general knowledge

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5.6. THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

5.6.1. KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Experience relates to the practical knowledge, skill and practice derived from the direct observation of events or from participation in events. As such this reflects the conscious events that make up an individual life based on personal encounters.

Percentage Response to Theme: 93% (14/15 respondents)

Number of Responses Related to the Theme: 22

Selected Quotations

- I really treasure the experience I have had the last ten years
- The building blocks needed to really lead are based on experience
- Experience is important in defining and addressing a problem
- Experience, and to some degree your expertise, provides a basis to take decisions
- The more experience you have the more you are able to draw upon to be able to solve problems and do these other things
- You develop relevant competence through trial and error, observation, courses ... through everything
- So if you add all these together, then experience is critical because academics alone is not good enough
- I am a great believer in you can make mistakes, but you mustn't make them twice
- Someone asked me recently: "how do you know so much about so much" which is actually asking: "that is experience and how do you get it?"
- My intuition gives me guidance and my experience allows me to be streetwise
- So you can do the learning bit but it is through experience that you actually apply it
- Authentic leadership is all about the experiences that have made you who you are
- The interesting thing about experience is that you often don't actually know how you got it or even know you have got it
- Leaders need to deliver, and this often a question of judgement, based your ability to understand issues and all your experience

Some responses took a different view on the importance of experience

- Unfortunately in our society today experience is to some extent discounted and people rely on academic background to qualify for jobs

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- I think it is important but not critical in getting things done
- Leaders need to use common sense and intuition

5.6.2. KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED THROUGH ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION

Academic qualifications include all formal academic training interventions and these are grouped into three categories: firstly, where qualifications are seen as a threshold competence; secondly, where qualifications are seen as a distinguishing competence; and finally, where qualifications are not required.

Percentage Response to Theme: 93% (14/15 respondents)

Number of Responses Related to the Theme: 24

Selected Quotations

Qualifications are not required

- I don't have an academic background, so I have no medical or commercial degrees behind me
- It would have been nice to have academic qualifications because I enjoy the academic side of it but my circumstances didn't allow me to get a university education
- The crazy thing was that the skills I acquired at varsity were almost completely irrelevant in my career as a leader
- It is absolutely clear to me that the technical aspects of an engineering, social sciences or medical degree do not equip you for the financial aspects required in business
- Companies need a balance of staff with formal education and staff with experience
- Okay, there have been people that have done well with no formal education, I think when we started the business it was easier to hire a person with experience and lower academic knowledge was lower ... and most people worked out well

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Qualifications are a threshold competence

- Academic qualification gives you the background and basic knowledge
- So I think your academic qualification just gives you the start, unless you become a professional and maintain that, it just gives you an entry point
- You have to have a minimum level of competence to do any job
- Essentially there are very few businesses that you can run without financial savvy
- You really have to develop a broad knowledge base and then build absolute depth in key areas

Qualifications are a distinguishing competence

- I think academic background is extremely important
- Tertiary education, under-graduate and preferably post-graduate, creates a platform for learning and for the development of thinking models that you can refine and apply through your life
- The longer people can stay at university the better because then they develop confidence, are able to contribute knowledge and bring real creative solutions
- I would say right now the basics are to get a PhD before you leave university
- The more sophisticated the company gets, the greater the requirement for academic qualifications
- The growing surplus of educated people requires segregation between those who are better educated and those who are not
- Education is critically important and I think more and more today education is a key differentiator

Specialisation

- People need to be competent unless they have a specialized role which greater depth
- I think people need to be specialists in their knowledge and keep on growing that speciality
- Mastery of a function becomes such a beautiful thing to see
- Competencies are relative to the issues you face and while you cannot be competent in everything you do need areas of specialist skill
- Although I think generalist knowledge at the start of a career, the more senior you get the more specialist knowledge you acquire I think
- I believe that you must have a good functional foundation before you move into business management
- I would say that right now the basics are to get a PhD before you leave university

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5.6.3. KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED THROUGH CONTINUOUS LEARNING

The ongoing process of modifying and developing existing knowledge, skills and habits that seeks to expand existing learning and incorporate any lessons learnt.

Percentage Response to Theme: 80% (12/15 respondents)

Number of Responses Related to the Theme: 18

Selected Quotations

- I read a lot, and I observe other people's behaviour
- If good leaders continually learn, then they can become better leaders
- Leaders need to take the time to learn continuously and they need to show an interest to learn across the business
- Leaders work on their knowledge all the time ... because they are really interested in the business world
- I always take leanings; I learn quickly and I would say learning is an interactive thing
- I unashamedly thought that I could learn from going on courses
- Learn and adjust, learn and adjust ... because the system needs a very strong feedback loop
- Working progressively to develop personal leadership and the ability to lead through people (rather than just leading people)
- I started profiling people when I was in sales and continually try to adjust to the needs of the person I am engaging
- A learning culture in an organization is extremely important
- It is about continuous improvement, stripping costs out, commoditisation and sweating your assets
- I still love reading business books and in each one there are one or two really great observations
- Reading has bought me huge benefits, including new insights, better language skills, etc
- And then you have got to continue learning to ensure you are always acquiring and refining your accumulated knowledge
- One of my key methods of learning is reflection on my decisions and actions
- You need to know basic legal requirements (labour, tax and company law)
- I knew very little about accounting when I started but I now know a lot about accounting because it is part of the work one does
- I had lots of other interests when I was at school and I never failed, and that was more important to me

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5.6.4. KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED THROUGH MENTORSHIP

Mentorship refers to any personal developmental relationship in which a less experienced or less knowledgeable person is given advice and guidance from a wise and trusted counsellor.

Percentage Response to Theme: 66% (10/15 respondents)

Number of Responses Related to the Theme: 16

Selected Quotations

- I am a great believer in mentorship ... mentors have been down that road you are embarking upon and can share their life experiences
- I don't think you ever get to the top of an organisation unless you have a mentor
- His clarity of thought, conviction, determination to succeed were turning points for me
- His strong ethics, values and innovation focus has allowed me to push the boundaries
- He was in the background but he looked after me and I could see his hand and his decision making in quite a few of the things that happened to me
- My mother played a very important role because she had aspirations for me that were different to the other children
- I think mentorship is important even if this is not a formal relationship but just the opportunity to see a leader in action close up
- If it is conscious or not, you need someone to follow and someone who helps you along
- Out of the blue I got invited to come and work for a business and my mentor had something to do with it
- If I had to say to you what did I learn from him, the list of things not to do would be longer than the list of things to do
- The opportunity to be close enough to him has left an impression on me which is something that will be with me for the rest of my life
- I have benefited from development interventions in my jobs

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5.7. KEY KNOWLEDGE ATTRIBUTES OF LEADERS

5.7.1. EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

Emotional competence describes a person's capacity to learn to identify, assess, and control their emotions.

Percentage Response to Theme: 87% (13/15 respondents)

Number of Responses Related to the Theme: 19

Selected Quotations

- It is intellectual maturity
- EQ is I think another very important characteristic
- I think EQ is much more important than IQ … by far
- People talk about emotional intelligence, I just have a different word for it, to me it is maturity
- I think people don't change their personalities, but you can change your behaviour and learn to behave differently with different people
- I think that EQ is probably the biggest factor in having good relationships and to get people to follow you so you must always try and improve, because you can change
- I believe in connecting with a person, understanding their tempo and where they are going … and then if they decide to do something different you bring them in
- I observe the people close to me and I really think an attribute of a leader in today's terms has to be emotional intelligence …. I subscribe strongly to that
- EQ is big listening, something most of the population don't do well
- I believe that emotional intelligence is much more valuable than pure intelligence
- You get some guys who are 40 or 50 years old and they just don't have the maturity that is required to operate at a certain level
- So it is a change in your life and it is how you choose to adapt to it. I am a firm believer that you spend 40 years taking from everybody and then you start giving back – very simply, broadly put
- We all learn how to behave differently in different situations …. it is just how it is, you are different with your superiors to your peers, to your children, to your spouse
- Leaders will need to make the unpopular decisions and stand by these
- I will often sit back in conversations and listen to it going on and then I go 'right, there is no answer here, so make a decision and then deal with it' – that is all
- I think many of us resist change, (and) as long as people are reasonably rational about it I am quite happy to listen to somebody argue the opposite case

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5.7.2. SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Social competence describes a person's social, emotional, and intellectual skills and behaviours that need to be learnt and developed in order to get along with other people.

Percentage Response to Theme: 87% (13/15 respondents)

Number of Responses Related to the Theme: 25

Selected Quotations

- I like people, I get on with people and I interact well with people, so I consider myself to have warm relations with people and that type of thing
- Bringing people with you ... you can't get things done unless there are folk with you
- So it is not just classroom learning ... It is learning from other people as well, how they do things, how they react and learning not to behave the way they behave as well
- What gives me a kick is to see success. It doesn't matter who gets the kudos for it, in fact it is far better when other people get the kudos
- If you get exposed to diverse peoples, worlds, and cultures at a young age, it helps you as you deal with people as you grow and gives you the ability to sit down with a range of people and feel absolutely comfortable and prepared
- I also recognize that everything is done through people; you have got to work with people, customers and everything else.
- You decide who to do business with... and I think the people around influence the way you operate
- I mean call it networking, accessing other networks, you need to talk to people
- You should have other interests and so on and so forth and be part of the community – inside and outside the working environment
- I really do respect other people's inputs, absolutely
- A leader can't think he is the only one in the organization that can lead, I mean delegation and proper delegation I think is very necessary – hard, but necessary
- I think first and foremost, leaders solve the problem
- As long as I am decisive and I deliver the goods and I take the majority of the people with me
- If you want to make things happen you have got to be absolutely clear on what it is you want to do and you need to be able to persevere ... so when people said 'no', you say 'yes' and try to persuade them in a rational manner
- For me, I don't think it supports your position if you become a personal friend of the people who report to you ... it just complicates the matter, so I don't believe in getting emotionally involved with these guys

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5.7.3. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Consistently convey information that it is received and understood by clients, colleagues, subordinates, and supervisors based on verbal and non-verbal ability, including active listening, empathy, feedback, assertiveness and the ability to cooperate within teams

Percentage Response to Theme: 73% (14/15 respondents)

Number of Responses Related to the Theme: 22

Selected Quotations

- I like the natural style of being out with the people and talking to them, but I prefer well structured formal presentations and I don't 'off the cuff' broad based communication
- I really work hard at how I communicate … both informally and formally
- I am comfortable giving people orders ... I am entirely comfortable with it and that doesn't mean you shout or bark an order but you are giving an instruction or making a request in an assertive way
- You are only going to get that [passion] if staff feel you are interested in what is happening ... so you must create feedback groups, talk to the people, …communicate
- And as a leader, I think one of my personal traits is I can be a bit blunt, I can be a bit brash, but I will tell them that that is the issue
- How I respond and what I say and how I say it is part of my management armoury ... I choose when I am going to be angry and I am quite effective ... There is a saying that power is like perfume: you use it sparingly (laughter)
- I am not scared to confront, but I don't confront for the sake of confrontation
- You have to constantly deal with how do you bring people along and that requires a basic understanding and appreciation of where all the members of your team are
- One of my shortcomings is that if I am angry you will see it on my face ... it is evident in my voice which I am told it goes cold … and I am animated and use my hands more

Active Listening

- I think I am also a good listener. So I ask questions, I ask a lot of questions. In other words I like insight. Maybe not the insight of the expert, but true
- I think part of that process is trying to be a reasonably good listener
- I believe in keeping a cohesive team you need to have people around the table

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Story Telling

- Leaders must be able to define and articulate the vision for the group
- Part of the teaching and coaching is telling stories and telling stories is sharing some of your most heartfelt moments or your insights that you gain
- And I never give people advice, I will tell them metaphors and parallels, and force them to think through what they need to know from listening to my stories
- I will use analogies. I use music a lot, I use video clippings a lot, and I like to engage and interact
- A strategy is a story and I love story telling … it is very much part of my heritage

5.7.4. BUSINESS ACUMEN

The ability to view business with a more holistic perspective, linked to an assessment of the external business landscape, key business drivers and executing the strategy to deliver the desired results.

Percentage Response to Theme: 53% (8/15 respondents)

Number of Responses Related to the Theme: 16

Selected Quotations

- You have got to understand the business - you need to if you actually want to get things done
- Business strategy has to be clear and then you put the structures and operations that you actually need
- I went and fell in love with the business challenges... and developed my ability to address these
- I just see business awareness as an absolutely fundamental competency for leadership
- I gave myself five to ten years in the line functions to develop my knowledge of the different business functions
- You need a rudimentary knowledge across the business ... you need to be a jack of all trades
- I have spent years understanding how we run our big factories and I still don't think I know enough
- A large chunk of my time was occupied by people issues which require competence in the management of human resources

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- You can still have a good overview of what is happening. So you can do that if you have grown through the ranks
- I knew very little about accounting when I started but I now know a lot about accounting because it is part of the work one does
- Experience is important because you have got to understand the business - I think it is important but not critical in getting things done
- Leaders need to put together teams with skills in areas that they lack
- We have specialists in service delivery areas and my job is to put it all together
- One of the things I always remember in reading about George Washington, is that he was a great leader because he surrounded himself with people who were smarter than he was
- If you don't have a huge cognitive ability ... then the people around you need more skills and capabilities than you have got and you harness them into a team

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6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results were analysed and interpreted using the literature to address the following questions:

- What knowledge, skills, and abilities are associated with leaders who get things done?
- Which leadership attributes are the most important determinants in how leaders get things done?

Therefore the results are discussed in terms of the three primary sections

- An assessment of the interview findings related to the literature framework in terms of
    a. the value of knowledge
    b. the acquisition of knowledge
    c. key knowledge attributes
- The relative importance of knowledge in relation to who leaders are and what leaders do, using the Revised Leadership Model
- An evaluation of the environment in which South African leaders function

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6.1. VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is important for leaders. 93% of the respondents identified the value of knowledge gained through books, media, training, life experience and any other sources. These knowledge attributes reflect the skills (learned capacity) and abilities (natural talents) which leaders can successfully apply to achieve expected results (Doh, 2003). The respondents identified that these knowledge attributes may be gained in various ways. These included experience, academic endeavour, reading, trial and error, learning from mistakes, dealing with people and reflection. It was proposed that an individual with a wide experience of life could give rise to a level of understanding and insight that would make them a more credible leader.

This finding is related to the emergence of the neocharismatic leadership theories which were influenced by how leaders can best influence followers (Robbins, 2003). Using the trait, behaviour and contingency approaches as a basis, these theories were focused on the leader's ability to demonstrate or act out behaviour that is emotionally appealing and symbolic. Given that the capacity to apply knowledge may be based on both the natural talent (ability) and acquired competence (skills) of leaders, this implies that a combination of personality, cognitive and behavioural factors demonstrate effective leadership (Kets de Vries & Florent-Treacy, 2002).

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Knowledge may be acquired through a combination of experience, formal training and continuous learning which allow leaders to notice, adapt and learn from change. It appears that a good general knowledge gives leaders a platform to build on. Reading and observing were cited as two of the best ways of gaining knowledge by the leaders interviewed. Learning the skills from others by questioning and observing is also seen to be important. Therefore, the value of knowledge may be seen as the importance of the process of acquiring the body of information, concepts and principles required to lead.

6.2. THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge acquisition is integrally tied to how the mind organises and represents information. This process of acquiring knowledge may have numerous sources but these may be grouped into those acquired through experience, formal academic training, informal continuous learning and development interventions including training, mentorship and coaching (Intagliata *et al.,* 2000). These represent key input channels for leaders to organise and link their particular knowledge attributes.

The interview outcomes imply that knowledge attributes can be successfully taught. However there is significant complexity in matching individual skills with interventions that develop and enhance the skills required to lead for each individual. This has resulted in a range of competency models and frameworks. Furthermore the individual satisfaction and enjoyment in acquiring knowledge

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appears to be crucial in developing the knowledge attributes of leaders who get things done.

The trend towards building leadership knowledge through competency models is based on the view that the top management team strongly impact organisational performance through their ability to manage and lead people (Carmeli *et al.,* 2006; Coutu, 2002). This is supported in the interviews by those respondents who propose that organisations should hire for attitude and potential, and then build the necessary skills. This view suggests that managerial skills are more important than intellectual ability and places greater emphasis on experience, mentorship and personal growth as vehicles for leadership development (acquisition of skill). Alternatively some interviewees believed that your personality (natural talents) was crucial to your leadership capability. Despite these different views, there was general consensus that leadership knowledge attributes can be nurtured and developed.

This difference in opinion among the leaders interviewed is also reflected in different responses to the value of academic qualifications. The literature suggests that a holistic educational approach that seeks to expand academic, theoretical preparation through rigorous conceptual and analytical training is required (Elmuti *et al.*, 2005). It further proposes that an understanding of motivation and willingness of leaders to invest in self-development is needed to align organisational and individual growth (Boyce *et al.*, 2010). Certain responses supported “the classic Anglo Saxon approach of a broad education followed a level of specialisation”. Other responses placed an emphasis on

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specialisation early in a leader's career since this would drive career growth and provide ongoing differentiation.

The input of experience, academic qualification, continuous learning and mentorship as key processes in leaders acquiring knowledge is consistent with the literature. Kolb (1984) identified that adults learn through an integrated group of processes which serve reinforce each other. His four-stage learning cycle begins with an 'immediate or concrete experience' which provides a basis for 'observations and reflections'. These are assimilated and distilled into 'abstract concepts' which can be 'actively tested' which create new experiences. However interview responses varied in terms of importance and value associated with different channels, particularly those related to academic qualification and the value placed on experience.

Acquiring knowledge is influenced by lessons learnt in managing change, the individual's learning process and personal growth needs. Therefore the value of knowledge may vary between leaders. Furthermore, individuals with inherent knowledge seeds should focus on ways to germinate and propagate their natural ability while those with specific needs must learn to develop skills in key development areas. The definition of learning is complex. Smith (1982) suggests that the term defies a precise definition but supports the view that learning is used to acquire and master what is already known, as well as the clarification experience, observation and reflection. Both channels allow individuals to develop a personal set of organised processes that can test ideas and concepts related to specific problems.

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6.2.1. KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Most leaders interviewed believe that experience is a fundamental basis for effective leadership. They treasure the experience that they have gained in their career and seek opportunities to expand this. One respondent stated: “It can be argued that someone whose experience of life gives rise to a level of understanding that makes them more credible as a leader”. This is consistent with Collins (2001) who proposed that significant life experiences may unlock the potential to rise to Level 5 Leadership. Respondents also said that experience is reflected in concepts such as common sense and intuition. Overall experience was typically seen as the basis to leaders to enhance their decision making capability. Therefore the more experience you are able to draw on in a particular situation, the greater your ability to make better decisions and solve issues.

The value of surviving events, observing events and learning from these events are seen as significant in developing stronger, engaged and committed leaders (Bennis *et al.*, 2002; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Toor *et al.*, 2008). Interview responses included comments such as experience allowed leaders to “join the dots” and find links that were not necessarily evident or obvious. A further observation was that leaders often do not know how they got their experience or that they are even aware that they have it. This may because it is acquired through trial and error, observation and understanding gained in similar events.

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Learning from one's mistakes is seen as a key way to gather experience. Typically making mistakes provides key reference points in leadership development. One respondent stated: "I believe you can make mistakes ... but you must not make the same mistake twice." A leader's performance also requires greater resilience in facing and understanding the world, making meaning of hardship and improvising solutions (Coutu, 2002).

It is evident that solving problems is important in preventing mistakes from compounding over time (Vogelgesang and Lester, 2009). Experience may also be based on observation and the ability to find problems before they trigger a chain of events. Observation can negate preconceptions, especially when collected under different circumstances and from varied perspectives (Brittain *et al.,* 2005). This proactive application of experience may be even more advantageous than learning from mistakes and this finding is consistent with the findings of Brittain *et al.* (2005).

A further process may be through mentorship and counselling which can serve to integrate experience through reflection. Kolb (1984) proposes that individuals learn using different styles Ideal learning involves a cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. Effective leadership and cross-functional teamwork are seen to develop over time and it may be necessary to pause and reflect on events from time to time. This is seen in three respondents identifying reflection as an important means of translating experiences into skilful leadership, and better teamwork.

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Many of the leaders interviewed believe that experience on its own is not a strong enough basis to becoming a good leader. These leaders believe that experience coupled with academic knowledge allows one to develop their full potential as it combines learning with a real situation. This is contested by alternative views that discount the value of experience in favour of academic qualification. These leaders suggest that academic qualification and specialisation are more valuable channels to acquire knowledge.

Thus the acquisition of experience may be from varied sources but overall this serves to deepen leadership skill and ability (Pinos *et al.*, 2006). It is evident from the interviews that once in a leadership role individuals value their ability to draw on their experiences from the past. In the words of one of the leaders interviewed: “The building blocks needed to really lead are based in experience.”

To some degree it may be proposed that experience integrates the other modes of learning. This includes the ability to process larger volumes of information in analysing options and using judgement to identify less obvious connections and alternatives. Most of the leaders interviewed agreed that their knowledge based on their experience was crucial in assisting define problems and provided valuable input into the processes required to address the problem and make appropriate decisions.

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6.2.2. KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED THROUGH ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION

There were different views on whether academic qualifications were seen as a threshold competence, or a distinguishing competence, or even required. Two respondents had no formal qualifications. While they expressed a degree of regret, their personal circumstances prevented them from gaining tertiary education. However this has not hindered their development as leaders and therefore academic qualification cannot be seen as a requirement although academic qualification could be seen as differentiator.

The majority of the leaders that were interviewed had some form of qualification. Formal education, they believe, provided individuals with a basis on which to build a career. In addition, a basic understanding of certain specific functions such as finance, human resources and legislative frameworks was needed. Learning models, structured thinking and gaining confidence were also identified as outputs of a university education.

Leaders who viewed academic qualification as a distinguishing competence agreed that academic knowledge was important. However it was seen to give leaders additional power in the organisation based on their specialist skill and capability. Specialisation provides leaders with depth of insight which can provide an advantage in the competitive modern economy. They also suggested that as an organisation grows, it becomes increasingly important for the leaders to have an academic background.

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It must be acknowledged that individuals can become successful leaders without an academic background. This supports Elmuti *et al.* (2005) who propose that significant leadership qualities can be successfully taught through training and experience. In fact a number of respondents referred to the limitations of academic training. This included views on crucial elements that were missing, such as financial savvy and human resource management, as well a general comment that university skills were "irrelevant in my career as a leader."

Although the respondents are well established in their careers and leadership roles, most of them believe strongly that academic qualifications are becoming increasingly important. As one respondent stated: "Education is critically important and ... (increasingly) education is a key differentiator." These comments were consistent with the views of eight respondents who believe that specialisation is crucial in launching and developing a leader's career.

6.2.3. KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED THROUGH CONTINUOUS LEARNING

The concept of continuous learning is seen to be important because it places priority on noticing, adapting and learning from change. As such this is less to do with training courses. It is focused on developing skills in reflection and inquiry that enable learning through experience, reading and observation. This is seen to support the alignment of organisational and individual focus (Boyce *et*

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al., 2010). 80% of the interview responses supported the notion that if good leaders learn continually they will develop into better leaders.

This finding is based on the notion that leaders need to consistently refine their accumulated knowledge. Many of the respondents referred to the value and satisfaction derived from reading. This was seen to provide insight and wisdom, as well as improved language skills and enhanced story telling capability. These observations and learnings consistently replenish the sources of reference and validated personal insight.

Training interventions can support this process, specifically where they are integrated into a wider context. Respondents valued interactive learning and actively sought learning opportunities. Leaders also placed value on their capacity to learn quickly and process learning. This may be seen as type of feedback loop. The process of continuous learning was seen to enable leaders process larger volumes of information, evaluate options and translate this into decisive actions.

The value of continuous learning is increasingly prominent given that many organizations are changing rapidly. This is consistent with Tichy (1997) who argued that companies who nurture the development of leaders at all levels in the organisation will be more successful. Therefore creating a learning culture in an organisation is seen as extremely important. This embeds the process of

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modifying existing knowledge, skills and habits may be formalised though, practice, imitation, concept formation, problem solving, and insight learning.

6.2.4. KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED THROUGH MENTORSHIP

The value of mentorships in formal structures and through the influence of key individuals is seen as fundamental in leadership development. The value of help and support from a range of people in empowering leaders to move forward with confidence in their career was evident. As one respondent stated: “I don’t think you ever get to the top of an organisation unless you have a mentor”. Not only do mentors guide and nurture leaders but they provide a tangible examples and life experiences that can be turning points in a leader’s development.

Mentorship and the influence of seniors may be linked to the value of personal networks and coaching. The importance of wise and trusted counsel in guiding leaders and supporting their development and career growth is significant. This includes insight into problems and proactive management of changing world filters (Pinos *et al.,* 2006).

Although only two thirds of the leaders interviewed made direct reference to the value of mentorship in their development, their views were strongly held. The value of mentorship was seen as a combination of developing skills through interacting with mentors and the importance of mentors shaping individual careers through direct interventions. This relates to the literature which

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suggests that the size and quality of personal networks support the delver of improved results (Cross *et al*., 2009). As such, mentorship and a leaders' wider personal networks, offer much broader learning opportunities than pure academic study. They can develop personal insights based on enhanced insight, associations and understanding.

6.3. KEY KNOWLEDGE ATTRIBUTES OF LEADERS

Knowledge attributes are the inner and personal qualities that constitute effective leadership. These attributes need to manage the constraints of existing mental models in the changing modern world and define the value and quality aspects of a leader's knowledge. They are a measure of the importance and practical application of knowledge in terms of the situation which faces a leader (Dulewicz & Higgs 2005; Kets de Vries & Florent-Treacy, 2002).

Therefore, what leaders KNOW may be described as the social and emotional skills that allow leaders to enact behaviours (Groves, 2005). The literature review framework has been integrated into the different interview response themes. These themes are emotional competence, social competence, communication skills, and business acumen.

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6.3.1. EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

Two thirds of the interviewees referred to the importance of acquiring emotional competence. The majority of interviewees identified emotional intelligence as a vital part of being a good leader. This was described as maturity, the ability to be balanced, empathy, “big listening” and respect. A number of responses placed a higher value on emotional intelligence (EQ) than intelligence (IQ). In other words, the capacity to identify, assess, and control your emotions were more valued than an individual’s biologically-based mental faculty. Carmeli *et al.* (2006) conclude that the managerial skills of the top management team strongly impact organisational performance and the skills to manage people, in particular, are found to be more important than intellectual ability.

Therefore a key knowledge attribute for leaders is their ability to develop emotional competence. Collins (2001) and Goleman (2000) both propose that emotional competence can be learnt. This is supported by interview responses which equate emotional intelligence to maturity. This implies that individuals can learn how to respond to specific circumstances in an appropriate and adaptive manner, and that these responses are generally learned rather than instinctive. This does not appear to be determined by age although the literature has established that tenure, age and experience have a significant, positive influence on leadership styles (Athansaw, 2003; Giri & Santra, 2006).

Therefore it appears that aspiring leaders need to demonstrate different characteristics in order to get things done and that these emotional

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competencies vary at different levels and in different ways. Furthermore, Goleman (2000) defines a leader's primary role as being someone that get results and proposes that the most effective leaders are those who are able to switch between different leadership styles flexibly as needed.

Goleman (2000) offers a clear, research based explanation of the emotional and social competencies of effective leadership. He identified five skills that enable the best leaders to maximize their own performance, as well as their followers' performance. These skills include self-awareness (knowing one's strengths, weaknesses, drives, values and impact on others); self-regulation (controlling or redirecting disruptive impulses or moods); motivation (relishing achievement for its own sake); empathy (understanding other people's emotional makeup): and social skill (building rapport with others to move them in desired directions) (Dulewicz *et al.*, 2005).

Collins (2001) describes the importance of building emotional competence and suggests that this is based on individual personal traits and characteristics. However those with the potential can develop the skills required to manage the complexity of integrating personal ambition that drives initial career success with the humility required to rise to Level 5 Leadership. Therefore Emotional Intelligence challenges traditional leadership qualities such as intelligence, toughness, determination and vision but Goleman, 2000 argues that they are insufficient and proposes that emotional intelligence can be learnt.

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6.3.2. SOCIAL COMPETENCE

The need to build effective interpersonal skills is seen to be a crucial attribute of leaders. The link of business results to the capability to build effective relationships is well established (Bossidy & Charan, 2002; Hersey & Blanchard, 1998). Social competence may be seen as a leader's capacity to learn the interpersonal skills required to get along with other people. The leaders interviews identified a range of social skills allow leaders the platform to enact appreciate behaviour. These included the need to work through people to achieve results, effective delegation and the pleasure of enabling other people to be successful.

Social competence describes the possession and nurturing of the social, emotional, and intellectual skills and behaviours needed to lead. This is particularly important in a diverse society such as South Africa. Key leadership social competencies are based on the capacity to forge close relationships and trust, as well those associated with being poised and comfortable in a number of social settings and with a variety of social groups.

Tichy (1997) proposes that companies who nurture the development of leaders at all levels in the organisation will be more successful. Social skill allows emotional intelligence to work. Leadership development initiatives identified in the interviews relates the literature, in particular the social skills, actions and behaviours required for executive storytelling, large group learning forums and action learning which can enhance the ability of leaders to get things done (Brittain *et al.*, 2005).

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6.3.3. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The depth of a leader's communication skill may be based on the ability to observe events and be responsive to these events (Brittain *et al.,* 2005). These skills often require additional support through coaching and mentorship interventions. Therefore the combination of management skills and communication skills are key areas of focus in the training and development of leaders (McCrimmon, 2009). Respondents were able to express a number of key communication skills that leaders may choose to use. These included the skill to give orders in a comfortable, assertive manner, as well as the ability to be blunt and direct where needed. It was proposed that leaders need to be able to confront issues and people and even choose when to be angry where necessary.

Most respondents agreed that a combination of formal and informal communication was preferred. Both approaches required hard work. But the true value of developing communication skills in leaders lies in their ability to articulate strategy. Successful strategic execution relies on the ability to articulate the strategy, create business value through the delivery of results and elements of innovation and creativity. Leaders were seen to define and execute business strategy through aligning people.

One of the favoured techniques to articulate strategy and purpose was to tell stories. Leaders are able to get results by personally conveying the story (defining success) and being active role models in achieving results (showing success) who invest in growth and development (ensuring sustained success).

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Brittain *et al.* (2005) support the view that Level 5 Leadership is required for successful organisational transformation by concluding that effective leadership of change can generate remarkable levels of productive energy within the organisation.

Metaphors and analogies were also useful techniques for describing strategic direction and for offering advice. In both cases people are forced to think through what is required from listening and understanding the story. Brittain *et al.,* (2005) propose that leaders can accelerate strategic implementation through active communication of what needs to change and what they expect to happen. Leaders can engage followers in shared meaning based on a distinctive and compelling story.

6.3.4. BUSINESS ACUMEN

Kotter (1990) argues that leadership and management are complementary systems of action required to be successful in today's business environment. His argument is based on the concepts that management is about coping with complexity while leadership is about coping with change. Kets de Vries *et al.* (2004) argue that leaders need to create value through building commitment to the organisation's vision, mission and strategies. A superior understanding of the dynamic engagement process between leaders and followers will drive superior organisational performance.

Vogelgesang and Lester (2009) found that transparency has yet to be operationalised by specific behaviours that can be applied to leadership

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development. The requirement for transparency is driven by the convergence of accountability requirements in terms of ethical corporate governance and sustainability reporting which has expanded from an environmental focus to include social and financial issues. The perception is that transparency will improve organisational outcomes though less deviant behaviour based on increased trust, engagement and performance levels (Kolk, 2008).

Underlying all the interview feedback was the assumption that leaders and managers aim to achieve the same result: getting things done. This is built on a passion to meet business challenges. This was described by one respondent as: “You have to understand the business to get things done.” Most leaders actively engage in learning as much about their businesses as possible. Typically this was seen as a general, high level overview. However leaders need the skill to ensure that they attract and develop the specialist skills in their teams. This enables them to coordinate successful business outcomes.

6.4. THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

The purpose of this exploratory research is to gain a deeper understanding of the leadership attributes that influence how South African business leaders get things done. Leadership attributes can be categorized into three broad categories, namely who leaders ARE (values, motives, personal traits, character), what leaders KNOW (skills, abilities, competencies) and what leaders DO (behaviour, habits, styles). Research has been conducted into each category in three separate, parallel reports.

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6.4.1. LEADERSHIP MODEL

The literature suggests that effective leadership can be defined in terms of the who leaders ARE, what leaders KNOW and what leaders DO. Kets de Vries and Florent-Treacy (2002), suggest that effective leadership consists of a combination of personality, cognitive and behavioural factors. Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) posit that the study of leadership should be a framework that includes personality, cognitive, learning and behavioural factors. Ulrich *et al.* (1999) state that effective leadership is dependent on both attributes and results and that leaders must strive for excellence in both through demonstrating attributes and achieving results.

These findings provided the basis for the Initial Leadership Model. Leadership attributes (personal traits, competencies and behaviours) were seen to equip leaders to be effective and achieve results. According to Goleman (2000), a leader's role cannot be underestimated in the performance of the organisation and he argues that the singular most important thing for any leader to do is get results. Therefore this Initial Leadership Model appeared to be well supported in literature.

During the interview process, this model was refined based on the research findings. It became evident that role of the environment and organisational context needed to be included. Furthermore the overlap between the three categories of leadership attributes indicated a stronger degree of integration and interdependence. Consequently the model was revised to reflect these key findings.

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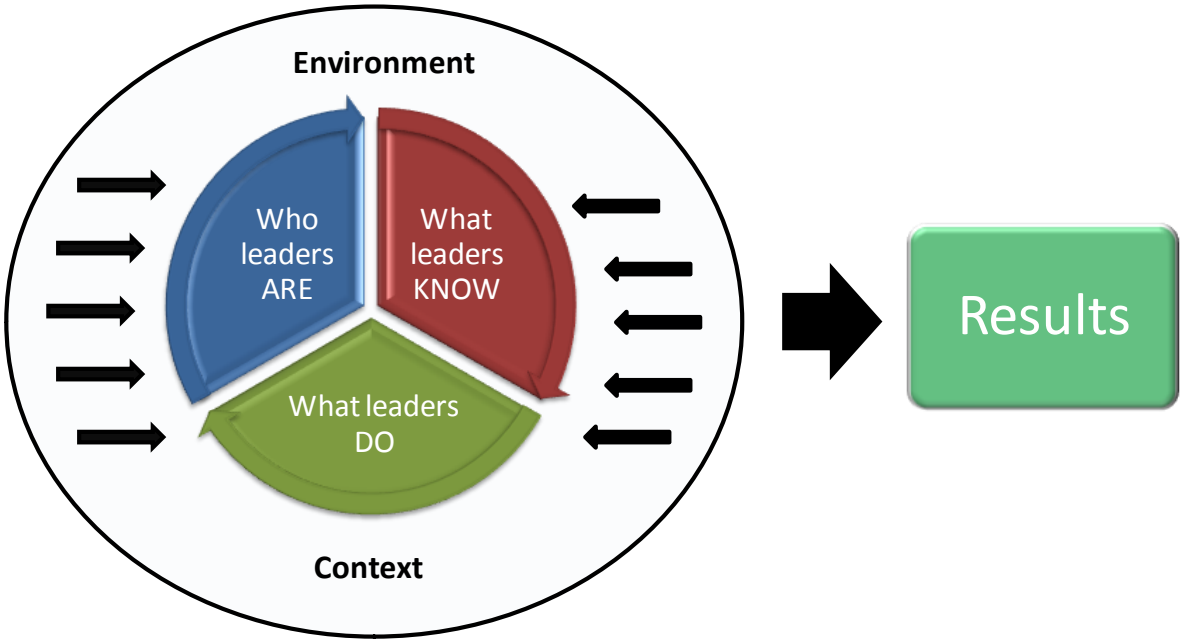
Figure 6: Revised Leadership Model



The Revised Leadership Model shows the influence and importance of the environment and context on leadership attributes. The environment is seen to represent the wider socio-political, economic and market influences, while the context refers to the immediate factors. A key finding in the research was that the ARE and DO leadership attributes were seen as equally important while the KNOW attributes were weighted as being less important. However a degree of interdependence was seen across all three and most leaders identified the need for this combination of attributes.

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6.4.2. LINKING KNOWLEDGE TO PERSONAL TRAITS AND BEHAVIOUR

As identified in the Revised Leadership Model, there are strong relationships between the knowledge attributes of leaders who get things done and who they are. One third of the respondents claimed that personal traits were the most important attribute in leaders getting things done. Another third rated this as the joint highest attribute. This is supported by the literature which shows consistent associations of specific traits with leadership emergence (Judge & Bono, 2000).

A number of the leaders interviewed identified the need for self awareness in effective leaders. Leaders need to be self aware in to avoid thinking they “can do something” when they have not acquired the knowledge or skill. It is also crucial in enabling individuals “learn to be leaders” and shape their development. As one respondent claimed: “I think I have done better out of my knowledge as opposed to what I am.” Therefore, while individuals are not able to change their personalities, they can learn to behave differently in different situations and with different people.

This self awareness and the willingness to continually develop allows leaders to develop appropriate behaviours. Certain respondents commented on the value of reflection. This allows leaders to assess the knowledge acquired through experience, training and coaching and translate this into behaviours that enable them to get things done. Respondents argued that individuals with wide experience had a level of understanding that made them more credible leaders.

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One respondent stated: “Leaders need to deliver, and this often a question of judgement, based your ability to understand issues and all your experience.”

This relates to the research finding that knowledge much broader than academic study. This is supported in the literature which suggests that effective leadership is based on a combination of personality, cognitive and behavioural factors (Kets de Vries & Florent-Treacy, 2002). Therefore, while knowledge attributes were rated lower than a leader’s personal traits and behaviours, they provide a key link.

Researchers have found personal traits to be excellent predictors of leadership emergence rather than leadership effectiveness (Boseman, 2008). Research also shows that leadership attributes are related to leadership outcomes Zaccaro, 2007). This research proposes that through greater self awareness, your personal strengths and weaknesses as a leader can be defined. This allows leaders the insight to nurture and develop the behaviours required to get things done. The importance of key knowledge attributes, including an awareness of the mechanisms to acquire knowledge, enable emerging leaders to be more effective and achieve results.

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6.4.3. LINKING KNOWLEDGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Most of the respondents identified the importance of the environment in developing the knowledge attributes required to lead. These were seen as both the wider socio-political and economic influences on their leadership styles, as well more local context such as social responsibility and organisation culture. This is supported by Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) who found that organisational context played a role in leadership through factors such as strategy, culture, policies, practices and the ability to learn as an organisation. Therefore the environment is seen to play a role in how leaders behave and lead.

The leaders create a vision and strategy within the constraints of the environment at that time and these strategies may even need to be changed as the environment changes. The changes in the environment could provide both challenges and opportunities for leaders and good leaders will be able to work within the situation. The unfortunate side is that leaders could realise that they are no longer the right person for that environment and a new leader is actually needed to deal with that situation.

Transformational leadership is part of the neocharismatic paradigm that focuses on the charismatic and affective elements of leadership (Northouse, 2004). It is a process that changes and transforms subordinates to engage in performance beyond expectations (Bass & Avolio, 1997). Transformational leaders raise followers' propensity to extend greater effort in at least three ways. Firstly, they

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raise awareness about the importance of certain goals and means for their attainment. Secondly, they induce followers to transcend their self-interest for the good of the organisation. And lastly, they stimulate and satisfy higher-order needs, such as self-esteem and self-actualisation (Bryman, 1992).

According to the leaders that were interviewed, this reflects certain specific characteristics that South African leaders need to have in order to be good leaders. These characteristics include a focus on wider goals, as well as the need to lower self-interest for the good of others and the organisation. This may be linked to the concept of Ubuntu. These attributes appear to be based on a level of tolerance and patience although this is contrasted with cases of poor ethics and executive responsibility. Despite these leadership challenges, the political background of the country has created the need for a number of appropriate leadership attributes. The respondents grouped these into the following:

- Firstly, to provide additional learning opportunities to individuals as part of a wider investment in society.
- Secondly, there the issue of black economic empowerment and other social investment which seek to address the divisions of the past.
- And the level of cultural diversity provides unique challenges to South African leaders which require sensitivity and the ability to adapt to their leadership styles to the situation

These challenges are seen to make South African businessmen and women better, more resilient leaders.

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7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this exploratory research is to gain a deeper understanding of the knowledge attributes that influence how South African business leaders get things done. The data obtained through fifteen in-depth interviews is consistent with little converse elements identified and most responses are consistent with the literature. These research findings have been documented in three primary groups: the value of knowledge attributes; the acquisition of knowledge attributes; and key knowledge skills.

Knowledge is important to leaders. 93% of the leaders interviewed indentified the value associated with developing a range of knowledge attributes which enable them to get things done. This implies leaders achieve success through the development their leadership knowledge, skills and abilities. Knowledge is described as the social and emotional skills that allow leaders to enact behaviours. Therefore the components of the knowledge necessary for leaders to get things done are based on an understanding of their skills (learned capacity) and their abilities (the natural talents).

Knowledge attributes were seen to be acquired in a number of different ways. The respondents' feedback has been grouped into experience, academic qualification, continuous learning and mentorship. This is consistent with adult learning theory which proposes that individuals learn using different styles. Kolb (1984) identified that ideal learning involves a cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting.

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Academic qualification is seen to be an increasingly important foundation for leaders. A broad general base of theoretical skills in combination with the depth of certain specialist skills was seen to be ideal. At the same time, individuals need to focus on continuous learning to modify their existing knowledge and respond to change. A smaller percentage of the respondents identified the personal insight and learning gained through mentorship as a crucial element of this process. Overall the leaders interviewed agreed that experience provided the integration that allowed sustained success in getting things done.

Researchers have found personal traits to be excellent predictors of leadership emergence rather than leadership effectiveness (Boseman, 2008). Research also shows that leadership attributes are related to leadership outcomes Zaccaro, 2007). This research proposes that through greater self awareness, your personal strengths and weaknesses as a leader can be defined. This allows leaders the insight to nurture and develop the behaviours required to get things done.

Each leader requires a unique combination of emotional competence, social competence, communication skills and business acumen. Strong leadership demands emotional strengths and behavioural characteristics which can draw deeply on a leader's mental and spiritual reserves. Modern senior executive roles requires leaders with character – integrity, courage, tenacity, learning ability and human relations skills – and not just technique (Kets de Vries & Florent-Treacy, 2002).

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The importance of key knowledge attributes, including an awareness of the mechanisms to acquire knowledge, enable emerging leaders to be more effective and achieve results. These knowledge attributes relate to the literature framework in terms of a leader's ability to translate strategy into organisational capability, mobilise individual commitment and demonstrate personal character. The ability to translate strategy into organisational capability is seen as a key leadership attribute. Therefore it is crucial that leaders develop the knowledge that can link strategy, operations and people processes in achieving effective results.

A changing definition of leadership and changing business circumstances have resulted in the need for leaders with new and refined skills, attitudes and attributes appropriate for a competitive global economy, a highly educated and mobile workforce, and rapidly changing business technologies and processes (Wood & Vilkinas, 2005). The research assessed the relative importance of knowledge and the relationship with personal traits and leadership behaviour. Knowledge was seen as relatively less important than personal traits and behaviours although it provides a crucial link between these leadership attributes. The importance of key knowledge attributes, including an awareness of the mechanisms to acquire knowledge, enable emerging leaders to be more effective and achieve sustained results. Therefore, the value of knowledge may be seen as the process of acquiring the body of information, concepts and principles required to lead and get things done.

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7.1. FUTURE RESEARCH

The knowledge requirements of leaders can accommodate a vast amount of new research. The following areas could form the basis of future research:

Knowledge Attributes

There are numerous opportunities for further research into the knowledge attributes of leaders who get things done. This may include the following:

- The knowledge attributes required to get results. Further research could assess the concept of getting results in more detail and aim to identify the links between results and the knowledge attributes required.
- The knowledge acquisition process. Since knowledge attributes appear to be learnt in numerous ways, the link between these learning processes and leader self awareness of knowledge acquisition could be assessed.
- The knowledge results required of South African leaders to get things done. This initial investigation into the South African business environment suggests that certain specific attributes are required and further research could focus on this aspect alone.
- The knowledge attributes of different types of leaders. This research was limited to leaders from listed organisations. Further research may consider different groupings such as smaller businesses, entrepreneurial ventures, government, academia or the public sector. Alternatively the research may consider specific sectors within the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

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The Leadership Model

This research was aligned to two parallel research reports which investigated the personal traits and behaviours of leaders who get things done. One of the outcomes was a Leadership Model which provided an initial review of the relationship between the ARE, KNOW and DO attributes of leaders who get things done. Further research could consider:

- A detailed investigation into links across these attributes or the reasons why no strong correlation appears evident.
- A detailed investigation into the interrelationship of the ARE, KNOW and DO leadership attributes. This research could aim to investigate key inter-dependencies and develop profiles of leaders based on these combinations.

Methodology

This research was limited by the availability of leaders identified and a more balanced set of interviews may be considered.

- An alternative approach to agreeing the interview sample and the composition of these leaders in terms of race, gender and age.
- Interviews that seek to validate leader comments through interviews with peers, subordinates and other parties who may be able to assist distil the important and valid knowledge attributes required to get things done.

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APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW LIST

Table 2: Interviewee List

Name	Current Position
Ashley Pearce	CEO - Merck South Africa
Barry Swartsberg	Group Executive Director - Discovery Holdings
Bernard Swanepoel	Director of Companies *(former CEO - Harmony)*
Brian Bruce	CEO - Murray & Roberts
Henry Laas	MD - Murray & Roberts Cementation
John Fagan	CEO - Sanofi-Aventis South Africa
Jonathan Louw	CEO - Adcock Ingram
Laurie Dippenaar	Chairman - First Rand
Millard Arnold	Group Legal Advisor - Murray & Roberts
Noel Guliwe	CEO - Aspen South Africa
Otto Pepler	Executive Coach and Consultant *(former MD - Sasol)*
Peter Joubert	Director of Companies *(former CEO - Afrox)*
Peter Matlare	CEO - Tiger Brands
Terry Volkwyn	CEO - Primedia Broadcasting
Tony Phillips	Director of Companies *(former CEO - Barloworld)*

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APPENDIX B – PRE INTERVIEW LETTER

August 2010

Dear *XYZ*

Attributes of Leaders Who Get Things Done

I am conducting research in an effort to better understand the attributes of leaders who get things done. This research is aligned with the research of two colleagues and the findings will be included in three separate research reports that will be submitted to the University of Pretoria, Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), This research is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA).

This is a topical issue in South Africa given our national leadership challenges and needs at all levels of society and business. Your insight and experience will be of great value to our research. We are particularly interested in your leadership abilities and will break the interview down into areas of interest:

- the personal characteristics that enable you to get things done
- the importance of work experience and academic skill in influencing your ability to get things done
- the behaviours and leadership styles you display in getting things done

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We are thankful that you have agreed to be interviewed by *Ian Sandilands* on this topic on *day month* 2010 at *time* and expect the interview to last no longer than one and a half hours. The interview will be an in-depth discussions based on a semi-structured approach. All the findings will be treated as confidential and individual transcripts will not be included in the report.

A letter from the Gordon Institute of Business is attached to confirm our student status. Should you have any need for further discussion prior to the interview, please contact me.

REGARDS,

Paul Deppe / Rashem Mothilal / Ian Sandilands

Email ian.sandilands@mweb.co.za

Mobile 083 300 9338

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APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW OUTLINE AND QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

In this section the researcher will introduce himself and provide background to the research study, including describing the research question.

This is a collaborative research project between myself and two other MBA colleagues. The purpose of this exploratory research is to gain a deeper understanding of the leadership attributes that influence how South African business leaders get things done. In the context of this research we define a leader who “gets things done” as someone who has achieved sustained financial results over a period of time.

There is more than enough evidence to suggest that the effectiveness of a leader is crucial to the success of the organization. We can add a huge amount of value to leadership theory and leadership development if we are able to understand what makes a leader successful i.e. how does a leader get things done. The title of our research is “The attributes of leaders who get things done” and from a research we hope to shed some valuable insight on this topic.

All the findings will be treated as confidential and individual transcripts will not be included in the report. No source, individual or organization will be identified within the text of the report but we would like to include a list containing your name, position and organization in our report. Should you be interested copies of the reports will be made available.

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2. Vital statistics (demographics) (5 minutes)

Confirm:

- Gender
- Age
- Race
- Tertiary education
- Time in an executive management position
- Current position.

3. Guiding questions (1 hour)

3.1. Break the ice question. Briefly, can you give me a short summary of your life as a leader – how old were you when you had your first leadership role, in which companies were you a leader and tell me a little about your leadership roles?

3.2. As a leader did you have any leadership highs and lows? Can you tell me about them?

3.3. Can you describe key events that shaped your career?

3.4. How do you get things done?

In our research, we identified three categories of attributes: who leaders are (values, motives, personal traits and character); what leaders know (skills, abilities and competencies); and what leaders do (behaviour, habits and styles).

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3.5. In your opinion, what are the personal characteristics that enable you to get things done?

3.6. How important is work experience and academic skill in influencing your ability to get things done?

3.7. What behaviours (the way you act) and leadership styles would you associate with how you get things done?

3.8. Are there other important characteristics in influencing how you get things done?

3.9. In your opinion, are any of these characteristics (explain) more dominant or more important in influencing how leaders get things done?

3.10. If you had 100 points to allocate between these three attributes that best describe your approach to getting things done, how many would you allocate to each.

Table 3: Relative Importance of ARE, KNOW and DO Attributes

ARE	KNOW	DO

3.11. Are there any specific characteristics that apply to South African leaders?

3.12. Is there anything else you might like to tell me?

THE END, THANK YOU

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APPENDIX D – POST INTERVIEW LETTER

August 2010

Dear *XYZ*

The Attributes of Leaders Who Get Things Done

We would like to thank you for making time available to be interviewed on *day month* 2010. Your insights will certainly make a significant contribution to our research findings and we are truly grateful.

Once the research has been formally accepted, we will ensure that you receive a copy of the reports if you so wish. We expect this to take place in the first quarter of 2011.

REGARDS,

Paul Deppe / Rashem Mothilal / Ian Sandilands

Email ian.sandilands@mweb.co.za

Mobile 083 300 9338

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APPENDIX E – DATA ANALYSIS

Table 4: The Value of Knowledge

#	Comment 1	Comment 2	Comment 3
1	The building blocks needed to really lead are based on experiences across the base of the pyramid	I think it is sort of a cliché but you don't hire for skill, you hire for attitude and then you train for skills	I think these are very useful to have and more valuable than specialist expertise
2	I think I have done better out of my knowledge as opposed to what I am. I think it has got me ahead and I have taken advantage of that	Leadership development is not as important as personal traits	
3	If you don't have the academic background, you tend to be more reliant on other people and develop general knowledge		
4	I think your basic skills and attributes are important		
5			
6	It can be argued that someone whose experience of life gives rise to a level of understanding that makes them more credible as a leader	One of the things you learn is that no-one who knows everything and therefore in the right context everyone can be a reasonably good leader	
7	I have to subscribe to the 'it can be taught' because I think of myself as somebody who learnt to be a leader	Leaders need the vision for the group and knowledge to articulate this	
8	I don't think you are 3born a leader. I think what happens is that your early development shapes you	I am a strategic and parallel thinker, so I can think of a zillion things at the same time	
9	Academic background is important but your breadth of knowledge and how well read you are crucial leadership ingredients	Leaders need to know what they are good at and what they are not good at ... and immediately supplement your weaknesses.	The worst thing is if poor self knowledge, because you think you can do something and you can't
10	Leaders need to define and execute business strategy through aligning their people	Organisations I think need different people at different phases of their development	Sometimes, intuitively, (you know) if it is not right you must let them walk away
11	I believe that the classic Anglo Saxon thing of a broad education followed by specialisation gives first prize	I am able to analyse options quite well and I am not thrown by the number of options or opinions	
12	Even though the entire team is supported on it, they would not run with it until they have my blessing		
13	I believe that you must have a good functional foundation before you move into business management		
14	Leaders need to deliver, and this often a question of judgement, based your ability to understand issues and all your experience	Leaders need good processing capabilities that allow their experience and knowledge to be applied to developing a solution very quickly	
15	I often say that I don't have every answer but we are going to do this and if we are wrong we are wrong		

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Table 5: Knowledge Acquired through Experience

#	Comment 1	Comment 2	Comment 3
1	Experience is important because you have got to understand the business - I think it is important but not critical in getting things done	The building blocks needed to really lead are based on experience	
2	I always think experience is good	I think people should be able to operate using their intuition and common sense	
3	I have never been scared about going to get wider experience	My intuition gives me guidance and my experience allows me to be streetwise	
4	I really treasure the experience I have had the last ten years, probably it is five decades worth	Experience, and to some degree expertise, provides a basis to take decisions	
5			
6	Experience, and to some degree your expertise, provides a basis to take decisions	Authentic leadership is all about who you are and the experiences that have made you who you are	
7	You develop relevant competence through trial and error, observation, courses ... through everything		
8	So if you add all these together, then experience is critical because academics alone is not good enough	Unfortunately in our society today experience is to some extent discounted and people rely on academic background to qualify for jobs	
9	I am a great believer in you can make mistakes, but you mustn't make them twice.		
10	Repeatability gives you the ability to deepen your knowledge and experience		
11	Experience, and to some degree your expertise, provides a basis to take decisions		
12	I am a very experienced person, learnt through hard experience across a number of environments and in a number of circumstances		
13	I was prepared to work in line functions to gain technical knowledge and experience	Experience is an important factor in defining a problem and the process to address that problem	
14	Someone asked me recently: "how do you know so much about so much" which is actually asking: "that is experience and how do you get it?	The interesting thing about experience is that you often don't actually know how you got it or even know you have got it.	
15	So you can do the learning bit but it is through experience that you actually apply it		

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Table 6: Knowledge Acquired through Academic Qualification

#	Comment 1	Comment 2	Comment 3
1	You have to have a minimum level of competence to do any job		People need to be competent unless they have a specialized role which greater depth
2	The more sophisticated the company gets, the greater the requirement for academic qualification	Companies need a balance of staff with formal education and staff with experience	I think people need to be specialists in their knowledge and keep on growing that speciality
3	I don't have an academic background, so I have no medical or commercial degrees behind me	It would have been nice to academic qualifications but my circumstances didn't allow me to get a university education	
4			
5	The longer people can stay at university the better because then they develop confidence, are able to contribute knowledge and bring real creative solutions	I would say right now the basics are to get a PhD before you leave university	Mastery of a function becomes such a beautiful thing to see
6			Competencies are relative to the issues you face and while you cannot be competent in everything you do need areas of specialist skill
7	The crazy thing was that the skills I acquired at varsity were almost completely irrelevant in my career as a leader		Although I think generalist knowledge at the start of a career, the more senior you get the more specialist knowledge you acquire I think
8	Education is critically important and I think more and more today education is a differentiator		
9	I think academic background is extremely important		
10	Tertiary education creates a platform for learning and developing thinking models that you can refine and apply through your life		You really have to develop a broad knowledge base and then build absolute depth in key areas
11	Essentially I think that there are very few businesses that you can run without financial savvy		It is absolutely clear to me that the technical aspects of an engineering, social sciences or medical degree do not equip you for the financial aspects required in business
12	The surplus of educated people requires segregation between those who are better educated and those who are not		
13	Academic qualification gives you the background and basic knowledge		I believe that you must have a good functional foundation before you move into business management
14	So I think your academic just gives you the start, unless you become a professional and maintain that it just gives you an entry point		
15	You can be as bright as a button but if you are a jerk you are not going to get anywhere		

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Table 7: Knowledge Acquired through Continuous Learning

#	Comment 1	Comment 2	Comment 3
1			
2	A learning culture in an organization is extremely important	Leaders work on their knowledge all the time ... because they are really interested in the business world	
3	I read a lot, and I observe everyone's behaviour	I read a lot, and I observe everyone's behaviour	
4	Leaders need to take the time to learn continuously and show your interest to learn across the business	it is about continuous improvement, stripping costs out, commoditisation and sweating your assets	
5	I always take leanings; I learn quickly and I would say learning is an interactive thing		
6			
7	I unashamedly thought that I could learn from going on courses	I still love reading business books and in each one there are one or two really great observations	
8	Learn and adjust, learn and adjust... because the system needs a very strong feedback loop		
9	One of my key methods of learning is reflection on my decisions and actions		
10	working progressively to develop personal leadership and the ability to lead through people (rather than just leading people)		
11	You should learn a lot since most leaders get better over time	If good leaders continually learn, then they can become better leaders	
12			
13	You need to know basic legal requirements (labour, tax and company law)		
14	And then you have got to continue learning to ensure you are always acquiring and refining your accumulated knowledge		
15	I started profiling people when I was in sales and continually try to adjust to the needs of the person I am engaging		

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Table 8: Knowledge Acquired through Mentorship

#	Comment 1	Comment 2	Comment 3
1	His clarity of thought, conviction and determination to succeed was a turning points for me		
2	His strong ethics, values and focus on innovation has allowed me to push the boundaries	Our current chairman has a personal touch and warmth that encourages people to contribute and allows a more inclusive approach	
3	I am a great believer in mentorship	Mentors have been down that road you are embarking upon and can share their life experiences	
4			
5	Early in my career I worked quite closely with someone and I really fell in love with the work she was doing	Out of the blue I got invited to come and work for a business and my mentor had something to do with it	
6			
7	He was in the background but he looked after me and I could see his hand and his decision making in quite a few of the things that happened to me	If I had to say to you what did I learn from him, the list of things not to do would be longer than the list of things to do	
8	My mother played a very important role because she had aspirations for me that were different to the other children		
9			
10			
11			
12	I think mentorship is important even if this is not a formal relationship but the opportunity to see a leader in action	The opportunity to be close enough to him has left an impression on me which is something that will be with me for the rest of my life	
13	If it is conscious or not, you need someone to follow and someone who helps you along	I have benefited from development interventions in my jobs	
14	I don't think you ever get to the top of an organization unless you have a mentor		
15	So we [the mentor] had conversations about how to engage people, how to harness people's energy, how to get the people to create the strategy, the ideas and the thoughts, but really his whole belief was to empower people to own their career		

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Table 9: Key Knowledge Attribute: Emotional Competence

#	Comment 1	Comment 2	Comment 3
1	But what I do think in the top quarter is maybe on emotional intelligence as opposed to IQ	Social intelligence: I think we are talking there about emotional intelligence, then I would say yes, absolutely	
2			
3			
4	I think EQ is much more important than IQ, by far. You can hire intelligent people and I tend to hire people that are much brighter than me and that is not too difficult		
5	I believe in connecting with a person, understanding their tempo and if they are going to go in the right direction then they have something, and then if they just decide to do something different you bring them in		
6	it is intellectual maturity		
7	You know because of observation of people close to me and so on, who I really think an attribute of a leader in today's terms has to be emotional intelligence. I really subscribe strongly to that.	I believe that emotional intelligence is much more valuable than pure intelligence	
8	EQ is I think another very important characteristic.		
9	And there might be times when you have got to guard against, and do your input, because you have a natural position of power then and you must be careful that your opinion doesn't carry undue weight about a topic of which you are really not that clued up		
10	I think it comes with confidence as a leader, is you know that you can access any of these things and you can access all of the emotions as well.		
11	Leaders will need to make the unpopular decisions and stand by these		
12	People talk about emotional intelligence, I just have a different word for it, to me it is maturity	You get some guys who are 40 or 50 years old and they just don't have the maturity that is required to operate at a certain level	
13	I think that is important in the sense that EQ is probably the biggest factor in having good relationships with people and to get people to follow you so you must always try and improve, because you can change		
14	I think people don't change their personalities, you can't. But you can change your behaviour, so certainly you can learn that, you can think about it and work it though and people do behave	The relationships change, but your inner core doesn't change.	

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#	Comment 1	Comment 2	Comment 3
	differently with different people. It is just how it is, you are different with your superiors to your inferiors, to your children, to your spouse		
15	EQ is big listening, something most of the population don't do well	So it is a change in your life and it is how you choose to adapt to it. I am a firm believer that you spend 40 years taking from everybody and then you start giving back – very simply, broadly put	I will often sit back in conversations and listen to it going on and then I go 'right, there is no answer here, so make a decision and then deal with it' – that is all you can do.

Table 10: Key Knowledge Attribute: Social Competence

#	Comment 1	Comment 2	Comment 3
1	If you don't have a huge cognitive ability ... then the people around you need more skills and capabilities than you have got and you harness them into a team	if you want to make things happen you have got to be absolutely clear on what it is you want to do and you need to be able to persevere.	
2	I like people, I get on with people and interact well with people, so I consider myself to have warm relations with people and that type of thing	I really think that is ultimately important. You decide who to do business with. I think people around you would influence the way you would operate.	
3	Bringing people with you; you can't get things done unless there are folk with you. And that is not necessarily about personal traits, what you know; it is a bit about your behaviour, that you are able to get them to say 'that is a good idea'. It is about being convincing really, and selling a story		
4	So it is not just classroom learning. It is learning from other people as well, how they do things, how they react and learning not to behave the way they behave as well	I mean call it networking, accessing other networks, you need to talk to people. They know how and the know who as well	So in the end if I don't have an answer, I don't have an answer, but critical is getting back to them. I don't know but I will find out
5	So you listen to your team and they will always be willing to give you another go because you listened. So listening is a very important skill I think leaders have	I think first and foremost, the most important thing that a leader does, is solves the problem. And the reason I say that is because if there is no problem you don't need a leader; there isn't a need for a leader unless there is a problem	The person who becomes an effective leader is the person who is able to offer a solution to the problem which is based on the vision that he /she has about what is the best way to deal with the problem they face
6	I really do respect other people's inputs, absolutely	A leader can't think he is the only one in the organization that can lead, I mean delegation and proper delegation I think is very necessary – hard, but necessary	The more positive behaviour I still think in my opinion is going from consultative involving people in conversations, discussions, the right ones especially, up to a point where people actually do expect a decision to be taken

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#	Comment 1	Comment 2	Comment 3
7	I didn't need to be chief executive to have relationships with (other) chief executives ... so title has never been an issue with me	It is about how you deal with your colleagues, what you deliver to them, etc	
8	What gives me a kick is to see success. It doesn't matter who gets the kudos for it, in fact it is far better when other people get the kudos		
9	If you get exposed to diverse peoples, worlds, cultures, at a young age, it helps you as you deal with people, as you grow.		
10	I think many of us resist change, (and) as long as people are reasonably rational about it I am quite happy to listen to somebody argue the opposite case		
11	I don't really socialize with the people I work with; although we engage on a regular basis, it is always at a professional level and it is always around relevant work-related matters	For me, I don't become a personal friend of work colleagues. It just complicates the matter, so I don't believe in getting emotionally involved with these guys	
12			
13	I also recognize that everything is done through people, you have got to work with people, customers and everything else.		
14	you have other interests and so on and so forth and you meet colleagues so you don't have a conscious network, you are part of the community		
15	So when I can see somebody is going off I think 'stay calm'... And if I have gum, I will put it between my teeth (Laughs).		

Table 11: Key Knowledge Attribute: Communication Skills

#	Comment 1	Comment 2	Comment 3
1			
2	I like the natural style of being out with the people and talking to them, but if you prepare a formal presentation to them, prepare exceptionally well structured material		
3	I really work hard at how I communicate ... both informally and formally	I will use analogies. I use music a lot, I use video clippings a lot, and I engage in interact.	A strategy is a story and I love story telling ... story telling is very much part of that heritage of mine
4	I believe in keeping a cohesive team you need to have people around the table	And as a leader, I think one of my personal traits is I can be a bit blunt, I can be a bit brash,	

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#	Comment 1	Comment 2	Comment 3
		but I will tell them that that is the issue	
5	Part of the teaching and coaching is telling stories and telling stories is sharing some of your most heartfelt moments or your insights that you gain	how I respond is part of my management armoury; I can choose when I am going to be angry and be quite effective.	There is a very nice saying that power is like perfume, you use it sparingly (laughter)
6	so you are going to have to constantly deal with how do you bring people along, and that requires a basic understanding and appreciation it seems to me of why a person isn't on board and what you need to do to mitigate the potential damage that any individual can have to what it is you are trying to achieve	What you have got to be able to do is to again listen and conceptualise what has been said and then pull that together in a way that makes people appreciate that is the solution that will make the most sense for the organization	
7	also the reflection ... what is it that he does that works, and what makes me want to walk through a brick wall for him!		
8	And I never give people advice, I will tell them metaphors and parallels, and force them to think through what they need to know from listening to my stories	I am not scared to confront, but I don't confront for the sake of confrontation.	
9	I am comfortable giving people orders.....I am entirely comfortable with it. That doesn't mean you shout or bark an order, but you are giving an instruction, requesting in an assertive way.	And then the vision here is for the group and he articulates this	I think I am also a good listener. So I ask questions, I ask a lot of questions. In other words I like insight. Maybe not the insight of the expert, but true understanding
10	if you are ever upset with anybody who works for you, try and call them into your office, close the door, or walk in the field out there if you can, and have the discussion	Now, one of my shortcomings is that if I am cross with you, you will see it on my face. It is written on my face, evident in my voice, not because I shout but because I am told it goes cold, and I am animated in the sense that I use my hands when I speak.	Passionate, he listens
11	I think part of that process is trying to be a reasonably good listener		
12	So I don't think it is a style that you as a leader do have, it is a variable in your approach that you apply depending on the individuals in the leadership team.		
13	You are only going to get that [passion] if they feel you are interested in what is happening. So you must do this through feedback groups and go and talk to the people, communicate		
14			
15			

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Table 12: Key Knowledge Attribute: Business Acumen

#	Comment 1	Comment 2	Comment 3
1	You have got to understand the business - you need to if you actually want to get things done	Experience is important because you have got to understand the business - I think it is important but not critical in getting things done	
2	Business strategy has to be clear and then you put the structures and operations that you actually need	I have spent years understanding how we run our big factories and I still don't think I know enough	
3			
4			
5			
6	Leaders need to put together teams with skills in areas that they lack	put together a team around me who could do all the things I don't know. That is what I want around me, I want someone with skills in areas I don't have so that as I sit there having to deal with those kinds of issues, it is a much more collegial kind of involvement but at the end of the day decisions that have to be taken are in check.	One of the things I always remember in reading about George Washington, is that he was a great leader because he surrounded himself with people who were smarter than he was
7	I went and fell in love with the business challenges... and developed my ability to address these		
8			
9			
10			
11	I just see business awareness as an absolutely fundamental competency for leadership	A large chunk of my time was occupied by people issues which require competence in the management of human resources	
12	We have specialists in service delivery areas and my job is to put it all together	We have a rather flat structure, where the guy that heads up that discipline needs to be an expert in his/her field	
13	I gave myself five to ten years in the line functions to develop my knowledge of the different business functions	You can still have a good overview of what is happening. So you can do that if you have grown through the ranks	
14	You need a rudimentary knowledge across the business to know they are not bullshitting you... you need to be a jack of all trades	I knew very little about accounting when I started but I now know a lot about accounting because it is part of the work one does	
15			

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