Differences and Similarities Amongst CEOs

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Leadership does not always require a title. In order to be a leader you do not necessarily need to be in a leadership position. True leadership is having the ability to influence others. Successful companies are led by CEOs who are great leaders. John Maxwell states "everything rises and falls on leadership, but knowing how to lead is only half the battle. Understanding leadership and actually leading are two different activities." (Maxell, 2013). “The Chief Executive Officer (“CEO”) is responsible for leading the development and execution of the company's long term strategy with a view to creating shareholder value. The CEO acts as a direct liaison between the Board and management of the Company and communicates to the Board on behalf of management”. (Retrieved form https://www.sterling-resources.com/docs/RolesAndRespCEO.pdf, 2017)

When identifying similarities and differences in several leaders in the technology field, I have chosen to take a look at interviews that were conducted on 10 CEOs, five men and five women. As we work day to day in our jobs, most of us in leadership positions use computers daily for various reasons. There has always been big debate as to the type of computers people prefer Mac or PC. When analyzing interviews with all 10 CEOs, it was surprising to see that all five women currently owned and preferred a MacBook instead of PC for various reasons such as style, elegance, weight, and user-friendliness. According to www.flodner.com, women are mostly less technical as compared to the men. This is the reason that has made the Mac favorite to the women. They certainly prefer the user-friendliness and the beautiful interface of the Mac machines. The ease of use and elegant experience of use is something that any woman won’t ever like to go without. (Retrieved from http://flodner.com/women-prefer-mac/, 2011). In her interview, Lauren McGoodwin, CEO of Career Contessa, says, “my MacBook Air is much lighter than my 2009 MacBook. Given that I’m lugging it with me everywhere from home to coffee meetings to our coworking space, I should have upgraded sooner. My shoulders appreciate it” (Orin, 12/15/15). All five male CEOs preferred PCs and owned various models. They also preferred the windows operating system versus MAC. Men are known to like building and fixing things, which may be the reason that some like to build their own computers. In his interview, Dan Shapiro, CEO of Glowforge says, “I currently have three “Wintel” boxes I’ve built from parts. My friends tease me about not moving to Macs, but I’m just too damn cheap” (Orin, 12/9/15).

Throughout a CEOs’ busy day, they are constantly talking and meeting with people; whether it is meeting with clients or colleagues. Having to deal with so many people on a daily basis requires specific personality traits. These traits can be found in extroverts and introverts. Extroverts are often described as talkative, sociable, action-oriented, enthusiastic, friendly, and out-going. Introverts tend to recharge by spending time alone. A majority of our 10 CEOs interviewed considered themselves to be introverts or a combination of both types of personalities. This clearly makes sense due to the fact that they need to have social interactions and clear constant communication for the overall success of the company, but at the same time they need to recharge due to hectic daily schedules. In his interview, Slava Rubin, CEO of Indiegogo says, “growing up I was definitely an extrovert. I’m still probably and extrovert, but given how much I interact with people every day I have definitely learned to get in touch with my introverted side now and then” (Orin, 10/29/14). During his interview, Ken Lin, CEO of Credit Karma, says, “I am an introvert that has learned to be more outgoing” (Orin, 3/25/15). It is safe to say that as you climb the ladder of success towards becoming a CEO; you must have a combination of both personality traits. After interacting with many people on a daily basis, in order to recharge and gain peace of mind; you must tap into your introverted side.

Figure 1 below shows how there is no complete extrovert or introvert because we use both functions. The percentage of the introvert/extrovert functions determines whether a person is a complete introvert or extrovert. Clearly this scales shows that CEOs are on both sides of the spectrum.



Figure 1. Identifies the percentage of functions to identify a specific personality.

The job of a CEO can be very demanding and stressful at times with very long hours. Working in this position may also require one to take work home. So the questions that have been asked to all CEOs is, how do they recharge? and what do they do to forget about work? Once again, we see a difference in how CEO males and females recharge. While it may seem like a majority of all CEOs like to recharge by spending time with family, having family dinners, or having family game nights; the reality is that these responses were mainly received by the females. In her interview, Jane Ni Dhulchaointigh, CEO of Sugru says, “I like seeing my friends and family. That’s pretty important to me. I find that kind of grounding: you get out of your own world and into someone else’s world. It’s quite nice” (Orin, 11/11/15). Only one out of five males enjoyed spending time and having dinner with his family in order to recharge while the others did various activities such as playing video games, listening to di.fm, or just being on the computer with no interruptions. Ken Lin, CEO of Credit Karma also stated during his interview, “I play video games for about half an hour each night before I go to bed. It clears my mind. If I don’t play, I’ll usually end up dreaming about work” (Orin, 3/25/15).

 Although not asked during the interviews of these 10 CEOs, but would be interesting to find out; is the controversial topic of the gender pay gap. When comparing these male and female CEOs, what gender would be the one most likely to receive a higher salary. For years, the controversy has been that men receive higher salaries than women for holding the same type of positions. Recently, there has been a shift in this controversial topic but there still remains a huge disparity. According to Joann S. Lublin from The Wall Street Journal, as a group, women CEOs out-earned and outperformed their male counterparts in 2016. Three of the 10 highest-paid chief executives of S&P 500 companies were women- a first in the 28-year-history of Wall Street Journal's CEO compensation report. Still, only five percent of S&P 500 companies have a woman at the helm.

 Although I have identified similarities and differences amongst a group of 10 CEOs that included five men and five women; no matter who is in charge or what gender they are, the fact is that the job as a CEO is very demanding and requires a special person with specific personality traits. It also requires a combination of leadership styles in order to make an impact by influencing others for the overall success of the company.

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