

LEADERSHIP

Contributed by Clare Ross
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Leadership is probably the single ingredient most in demand today. Leadership at all levels in the organization but especially at the top. What is good leadership and how to achieve it? An interview with Clare G. Ross one of the industry's top management consultants.

Leadership An Interview With Clare G. Ross, CMCQ What do you see as the most important issue facing Design Firms today? A Leadership is probably the single ingredient most in demand today. Leadership at all levels in the organization but especially at the top. Q What do you mean by leadership? A The leader in a Design Firm whether you call him the President, CEO or Managing Partner, must be able to do several things really well to succeed. 1. Develop a strategic vision for the firm that ensures its long-term survival and healthy growth. 2. Stay on top of the "numbers" to understand the financial impact of operating and marketing decisions. 3. Build an effective team and command the respect and enthusiastic support of his people in an atmosphere of mutual trust. He must lead by example and base recognition and reward on results achieved. Q Why is this a problem in Design Firms? A Many Design Firms have excellent leadership. In my contacts with hundreds of Design Firms as both a Consultant and an Editor, I have observed what I believe are root causes to the leadership vacuum. 1. The myth that good managers make good leaders. Nothing could be further from the truth. A good leader needs to be a good manager but a good managers do not necessarily make good leaders. 2. Many Design Firms have no organized process for identifying and preparing young managers for leadership roles. Many CEO's and Managers have their positions because of their ownership stake in the firm. So sometimes the ownership structure can restrict the ability of any CEO to emerge and exercise any leadership. Q - What are some of the attributes that you look for in a well led firm?

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1. Well led firms have a vision, a mission, a philosophy. They know what they are about, and where they are going. They're Proactive not Reactive in their approach to running their firms.
2. They recognize the importance of people. Putting superstars in game breaker positions.
3. They are superior performers often with 20 30% pretax profits.
4. Well led firms involve their key people at all levels in planning and setting company goals. Leaders recognize that people get results plans don't.

Q Are you saying that well led firms do a better job of strategic planning?

A They go even further than that. They recognize that strategic planning is only one element. They're effective in integrating the planning process top down bottom up and horizontally in the organization. So the whole team is focused on the same priorities. They're able to tie in their operational one year planning and profit goals into the long term objectives. This is a powerful tool that focuses company financial and people resources where the probability for success is the greatest.

Q What do you see as the future prospects for leadership in the Design professionals?

A Well led firms will be able to attract the best talent and will experience significant growth and profits at the expense of firms who don't recognize the importance of Leadership to the success of the firm.