

## Leadership Maturity

My newly appointed boss had invited me to lunch to discuss observations from of the organization since his arrival, and where I had acted as stand-in manager.

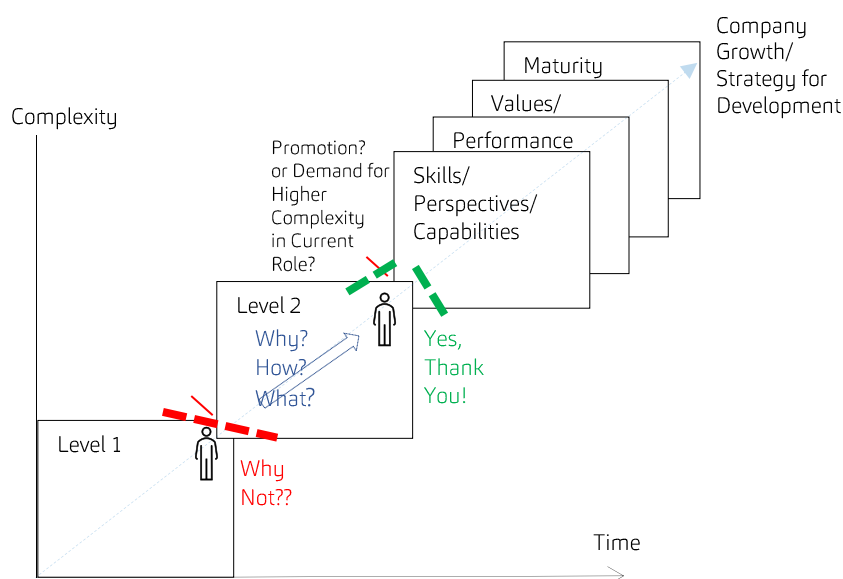
I had 3 peas left on the plate when he laid it out; *“What I hear is that you are a bully - you don’t listen, you overrule people, and they are starting to shy away from working with you. You have this choice – either to improve immediately or leave the organization”*.

In that second my stomach collapsed; the 3 peas turned into 3 tennis balls impossible to swallow. Within 24 hours I reverted to my boss accepting responsibility and asked for his guidance and help to develop and grown up, and within 7 months from that fateful lunch I got promoted to VP of Sales. My learning was; in 6 years prior to that lunch I had been promoted several times, moved jobs and locations to ever more difficult assignments, and while I felt ‘successful’ performance-wise, looking in the rear-view I see that the bi-annual performance appraisals had nothing to offer in terms of coaching, mentoring or developing me as a leader and human. I was left to myself, and I became increasingly immature.

This is 15 years ago, and today in my work as a leadership coach I find that companies are still mostly fixated on standard leadership attributes such as:

- Performance, adherence to company values and leadership codex’ being guided, coached and develop internally in organizations
- Cognitive skills, be it strategy, marketing, sales, project management, negotiation skills etc are capabilities taught in off-the-shelves trainings/ seminars and tricks are available in books, articles, videos
- Perspective: for instance strategic thinking can be developed in similar manners as cognitive skills

These are relatively easy and quick to expand, to advance, to adopt, and not least they are familiar to the manager evaluating the prospect leader.



Leadership maturity on the other hand;

- Is complex – you can have multiple levers to adjust
- It’s a slow fix – to mature is typically a multi-year effort – you need to start early

- It takes courage to venture out of your comfort zone, to re-set your self-awareness
- May need a coach to help feedforward new behaviors and rules of engagements
- Requires involvement of a manager who can both, explain future requirements and standards as a consequence of promotions, but also how they relate to the strategic direction of the organization.

So, what is leadership maturity?

In my version it's several behavioral strings intertwined:

- 'To level up' – structurally to understand the need for new standards, expectations, and rules of the game at a next level of management.
- Political quotient (PQ) - being able to read or sniff out the political landscape and messages inside organizations and navigate accordingly.
- Tact and courtesy (somewhat along the lines of executive presence) being able to hold yourself together in any given situation despite complexity, risks and stress.
- Emotional intelligence (EQ) – advance your ability to interact, work with and respond to people
- Maturity - being 'on or ahead of your years' in thinking and perspectives

What I have found in debating leadership maturity is that most will acknowledge the need for enhancing your presence at every transition to new jobs and functions, but few are able to offer you a 5-10 year horizon of behavioral advancement.

Asked directly – *how does a 30-35-years-old talent/ young leader behave like, or what about the 40-45-year-old manager aspiring to a senior role?* – and you get stary eyes. The consequence is that we deploy a strategy of hope/ chance that people will make it, when what we need is to intellectualize on future behaviors just like we discuss business expansion.

Afterall, we will find it hard to scale a business when we can't scale or level up our full package of leadership capabilities.

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And yes, I'm also in the market to also sell you leadership trainings, but you decide from this portfolio:

- ✓ "[Welcome to Leadership](#)" – talents, young leaders and managers with no prior training – get off to a great start
- ✓ "[Leaders – What's Next?!](#)" – you have been a leader for 3-5 years, what do you do now to become promotable?
- ✓ "[The Management Side of Leadership](#)" – examination of the processes of the employee life cycle
- ✓ "[Personal Leadership](#)" – mature leaders aiming to improve team and personal performance to v2.0
- ✓ "[Leading Leaders](#)" – for executive ready to involve the organization in culture and performance improvements
- And
- ✓ "[Tag Ledelsen i Produktionen](#)" – team leaders in/around production environment – a splendid choice!

Kind regards,

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