

Press release
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Effective leadership styles required to lead a business (or a country)

- 75% of workers and 46% of CFOs rate integrity as the most important leadership quality in a business leader.
- Leadership qualities that are rated highly within the workplace have distinctive similarities to leadership qualities displayed by political leaders.
- The Australian Robert Half leadership team share what they think makes an effective leader in the modern workplace.

Sydney, 3 November 2016 – In the countdown to the final days of the 2016 US Presidential Election, business leaders and working professionals have reflected on which leadership attributes are important, not only for leading a country but also for running a business. While leadership in politics cannot be equated with leadership in business, there are some distinct similarities that make for effective leadership whether it be in politics or the workplace.

A recent Robert Half Management Resources survey asked more than 1,000 US working professionals and 2,200 US-based Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) the following question: “What is the most important leadership attribute?” The survey findings reveal both groups (75% of workers and 46% of CFOs) place integrity at the top of the list. Personal qualities, such as integrity and fairness, are also rated higher than traditional business virtues such as competitiveness and decisiveness.

David Jones, Senior Managing Director of Robert Half Asia Pacific said: *“Business leaders who display a high level of integrity within the workplace and who treat their staff with respect can maximise the efforts of the team they lead. While acting with integrity and mutual respect are crucial elements of managing a team, having good business acumen and driving the business’s bottom line by attracting investors and customers are also vital leadership traits in today’s competitive market.”*

In light of this, the Australian leadership team at [Robert Half](#) reflect on what they think makes an effective leader in the modern workplace.

1. Integrity and fairness

When identifying leadership attributes, the personal traits of integrity and fairness are rated higher than any other by both working professionals and C-suite executives.

David Jones, Senior Managing Director of Robert Half Asia Pacific said: *“Leaders who demonstrate fairness are thought of more highly by their peers, which in turn can lead to a more confident workforce. And in most instances, confidence is extremely contagious within a workplace, which will help employees become inspired in the work that they do.”*

“However, it’s important for leaders not to overcompensate with self-confidence as there’s a fine line between being confident and overconfidence. Overconfident leaders can fast lose their credibility. It’s still important for business leaders to remain humble in their approach to not only managing people, but also inspiring them into a collaborative mindset to match their company’s agenda.”

2. Decisiveness and strategic mindset

While the more personable skills of integrity and fairness are rated higher, being decisive and strategic in the workplace are also considered to be essential skills to embody and are part of the process of attaining a high leadership position. After integrity and fairness, 37% of workers and 22% of CFOs rate decisiveness as one of the most important attributes in a corporate leader, followed by 32% of workers and CFOs respectively who say a strategic mindset is among the most important traits.

Nicole Gorton, Director, Robert Half Australia said: *“Success breeds momentum. Successful leaders have to be decisive and be able to show strength in order to set the standard of work they expect from their employees. Employees need their managers and company leaders to make difficult decisions if necessary and ensure the company delivers on business objectives and goals. This level of decisiveness and strategic thinking is essential to the success of a business.”*

“It’s important to remember that showing strength within the workplace does not include domineering and dismissive behaviour, traits that will not ensure a loyal following. Employees are far more likely to go the extra mile and deliver favourable results when their boss leads by example.”

US workers and CFOs were asked: **“Which of these are the most important attributes in a corporate leader?”**

	Workers	CFOs
Integrity	75%	46%
Fairness	58%	45%
Decisiveness	37%	22%
Strategic mindset	32%	32%
Transparency	25%	33%
Accessibility	23%	33%
Collaborative mindset	20%	39%
Competitiveness	10%	30%

Source: Independent survey commissioned by Robert Half Management Resources among over 1000 US office workers and 2,200 CFOs – up to three responses permitted.

3. Transparency and accessibility

The leadership traits of transparency and accessibility come down to developing and maintaining open lines of communication and interpersonal communication – being able to effectively communicate with staff at all levels is what can distinguish a leader from the pack. Successful leaders are open with their staff and also make themselves available when their employees have a pressing issue. One in three CFOs (33%) and one in four (25%) workers rate transparency as one of the most essential leadership attributes, followed by 33% of CFOs and 23% of workers who identify accessibility as being one of the most important skills.

Andrew Morris, Director Robert Half Australia said: *“Confidence is at the core of leaders who effectively communicate within the workplace. Being able to convey complex ideas and set a game plan for their employees to achieve their goals will inevitably result in a more productive workplace. Effective communicators are able to project their vision to their staff and help identify the necessary steps to achieving that vision.”*

“Leaders who are excellent communicators are also able to explain how their staff members’ work impacts the company’s objectives, which will help make them feel connected to the company’s future success. Employees who have a solid understanding of the direction of their company are generally more engaged and productive.”

4. Collaborative mindset and competitiveness

While rated lower than previously mentioned personal attributes, workplace collaboration and being competitive are essential leadership qualities of any professional, traits that are also required for companies to remain viable. Finally, 39% of CFOs and 20% of workers rate a collaborative mindset as one of their most important leadership qualities, followed by 30% of CFOs and only 10% of workers who think competitiveness is one of the most important leadership traits.

Andrew Brushfield, Director, Robert Half Victoria and Western Australia said: *“Leaders who take a collaborative approach with their staff will be more successful at engaging their employees. People are particularly sensitive to signs of trustworthiness in a leader, and employees are more likely to perform exceptionally well in their role when they believe in the work they are doing. Every task within a workplace, from the day-to-day operational tasks to strategic planning, requires a certain amount of trust and collaboration in order for the employee to feel inspired and engaged.”*

“Exceptional leaders have the ability to motivate and inspire their staff to the point where their employees are willing to go above and beyond, and not just because they enjoy the work they do, but because they believe in the company’s vision. This can be displayed through a healthy amount of competitiveness. It takes a true leader to be able to inspire this amount of dedication. In essence, it is through a leader’s actions that leadership becomes clear to his or her team.”

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Notes to editors

About the Research

The surveys were developed by Robert Half Management Resources and conducted by independent research firms. The survey of workers includes responses from more than 1,000 U.S. professionals age 18 and over and employed in office environments. The CFO survey is based on telephone interviews with more than 2,200 CFOs from a stratified random sample of companies in more than 20 of the largest U.S. metropolitan areas.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the world’s first and largest specialised recruitment consultancy and member of the S&P 500. Founded in 1948, the company has over 325 offices worldwide providing temporary, interim and permanent recruitment solutions for accounting and finance, financial services, technology, and administrative professionals. Robert Half Australia has offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Mount Waverley, Perth and Sydney. More information on roberthalf.com.au.

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