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Success Guide – *An Inspirational Guide to Excel as a Leader and CEO*

— PROFESSOR M.S. RAO, HYDERABAD, INDIA —

"I shall pass this way but once. Therefore, any good that I can do, or any kindness that I can show, let me do it now for I shall not pass this way again."

— William Penn

Introduction

The dual purposes of this paper is to 1) share the author's vision to help create one million students to serve as diverse, global leaders and 2) share tools and techniques for them to excel as chief executives – quickly. This "blueprint" provides an outline for chief executives to lead for the first 100 days. It emphasizes the importance of female leadership, inspires global youth to develop and enhance soft leadership skills (i.e., people-orientated rather than task-oriented; transformational leadership rather than transactional leadership; others-centered leadership rather than self-centered leadership), and describes innovative tools and techniques to excel and more importantly, to make a difference to the world.

I am passionate about shaping students and enjoy spending time with them to understand their challenges and to hopefully provide them with solutions. As my vision is to build one million students as global leaders, I consider spending my time with them as an investment. And it is a great opportunity for me personally to understand their psychology, perceptions, expectations, and aspirations with respect to career, success, entrepreneurship, leadership, and life.

Vision: Build One Million Global Leaders

I share my lifetime goal with students and participants regularly during my teaching and training programs. I also share it in my articles, blogs, books, and social media. I am very passionate about this prestigious, nonprofit project.

I have already trained more than 30,000 students so far, and I conduct classes, seminars, workshops, and leadership training programs for students and employees. Whenever the educational institutions invite me to provide training programs, I honor their request and visit, with excitement, to share my passion, vision, and knowledge. Apart from my active involvement in grooming one million students directly, I am currently building a core team of

50 die-hard followers through a five-bucket approach who will assist me to accomplish my goal.

Execution: If one ardently desires to change society, he or she will need citizens who are highly committed and dedicated. Hence, I am looking for students with a positive, right, and strong attitude to carry forward my passion and vision to build a better society to achieve the ultimate objective of global peace and prosperity.

Presently I have constructed a team of several students and corporate executives who share my passion and vision with others. They connected with me through teaching and training programs. I send them e-mails and connect with them on social media. Sometimes they phone me. I have been building this team for the last 9 years, and I am still doing it by interviewing prospective candidates.

Top 50 Hard Core Team Members: During my teaching and training programs, there are students and participants who follow my ideals and ideas, and seek my career guidance and counseling. I have tentatively created a blueprint consisting of “5 Levels of Leadership” to help fashion these global leaders:

1. In the first level, I invite students who are interested in my passion and vision for discussion and counsel them. During the discussion, I look at various aspects including attitude, academic excellence, gratitude, persistence, team spirit, leadership abilities, continuous learning dedication, and above all, heart to make a difference in the world. I share with them my passion and vision to build one million students as global leaders. If I find that they are seriously interested in sharing and spreading my passion and vision with others on a nonprofit basis, I include their names in the dedication list of my upcoming leadership books. This dedication provides them with a reference for employment interviews as well as lifetime acknowledgement.
2. I assess their prospective level of contribution and commitment towards my cause apart from their performance. If I find that they contribute to society through Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and other nonprofits, I will promote them to the second level. Periodically, I will have personal interaction with them to gage their progress. If there is any need for my presence to inspire others who aspire to grow as global leaders, I will attend and address the conferences/workshops/seminars free of cost. Those who are found lacking in commitment and dedication towards this cause or are insincere about their intentions will not gain entry to the second level.
3. At the third level, I provide them free leadership training programs depending on our mutual convenience. I steadfastly monitor their performance. If these potential leaders maintain continuous enthusiasm to spread my vision and passion and share knowledge with others, I will elevate them to the fourth level.
4. I will review whether they are providing leadership training programs voluntarily on a nonprofit basis to others to groom them as global leaders. If I find that they are performing well and in congruence with their commitment, I will publish their interviews with photos in my authored book outlining their aspirations and expectations; principles and philosophies; and commitment and contribution to society. In this way, they are gradually exposed to international interaction.
5. At the fifth level, I will take the 50 best brains who contributed with heart to serve society and introduce them to my international connections to enable them to grow as global leaders. At this level, all 50 core team members must take a pledge to mentor

and train 50 more core team members as global leaders during their lifetime and again, on a nonprofit basis, with the goal of instituting positive changes around the world.

To accomplish my vision, I make use of social media including my four blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Google+. I post articles on career, leadership, motivation, success, and learning and development regularly on my Facebook Page and share same with students. This has truly become the launching to successfully accomplish my lifetime vision to create one million students as global leaders by 2030.

Transformation: Over a period of time, more leaders are created by me and by my “Top 50 Hardcore Team Members.” We work as a collective unit to make a difference in the world. When a stone is thrown into water, it takes time for the ripples to reach the shore. My initiative started to create ripple effects to make a positive change among some students. Once the ripples reach the shore, I can expect total transformation of youth for the global good. I intend to infuse my passion and vision into the young brigade who are filled with lots of fire in their bellies but lack the right direction. I would like to become a change agent to shepherd the youth to groom them as global leaders. During my teaching and training programs I find students with abundant energy and enthusiasm to lead those who are unsatisfied with the way things are happening around them in society. We may consider them an impatient cohort but when we observe closely and clearly, youth is more worried about India. They are looking for fresh blood to lead from the front.

My role is to ensure that the right people are in the right place at the right time to enable them to secure global opportunities. When a drop of rain falls into an ocean, it is without any significance. However, when the same drop of rain falls into a shell, it becomes a pearl. My task is to make sure that the drops of rain fall into the shells and become pearls. Hence, I would like to ensure that the students don't lose their significance by pursuing the wrong paths. I want to ensure that they follow the right paths, careers, and areas at the right time and cultivate them as global leaders.

A Strong Leadership Pipeline: Building one million global leaders becomes a strong leadership pipeline for the world as currently baby boomers are retiring and there is an urgent need to train leaders at all levels – especially at the senior level. These global leaders can contribute aggressively to make a difference. They can make India a prosperous nation and a super power in the world. They can work in any part of the world to create a better world. I am optimistic that I can contribute my best as an individual by building a passionate team of 50 to build one million global leaders by 2030. In case of my untimely death, my “Top 50 Hardcore Team Members” will continue my vision with a tremendous passion. Hence, I am committed and dedicated to my cause, and above all, I am confident about my passion, vision, execution, and transformation of students as global leaders with a global mindset to make a difference to the world.

An Action Plan for New CEOs

When Tim Cook took over from Steve Jobs as the head of Apple Computers, the expectations were higher as his predecessor was a legendary innovation leadership guru. When Jeff Immelt took over from Jack Welch as the head of General Electric, the expectations were higher as Jack Welch was rated as one of the best corporate leaders in the world. It is a Herculean task for new CEOs to step into the shoes as CEOs especially when their predecessors were legends.

First 100 Days for CEOs: CEOs who can make solid first impressions and deliver are destined for success. It is a great opportunity for these new CEOs to use this time to project an image — formal versus informal, hands-on versus hands-off. Hence, they must be careful during this initial time period in office. The concept of the first 100 days in office is widely used in the world of politics. It is also known as the honeymoon period in some parts of the world. It is the period of “make-or-break” for new CEOs. These are the crucial and critical days whether you are a chief executive or a politician. Commenting about the accomplishments of his mission, John F. Kennedy once remarked: “All this will not be finished in the first hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first thousand days, nor in the life of this administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.”

A study by the Center for Creative Leadership reveals that 40 percent of leaders going into new roles fail in their first eighteen months.¹ Additionally, Scott Weighart, Director of Learning and Development, Bates Communications rightly remarked, “In your first 100 days as CEO, you’re living life in a fishbowl.” Hence, new CEOs must take precautionary measures during this honeymoon period to achieve their leadership effectiveness and ensure organizational excellence.

One study shows that the most pressing challenges for CEOs are strategic alignment and speed of execution.² Hence, new CEOs must address these issues earnestly during the first 100 days in office. If CEOs prove well initially, they will succeed; otherwise, they will ultimately fail miserably. All stakeholders restrain from criticism during this honeymoon period as this is the grace time given for new CEOs to get adjusted and work as per their vision and at their own pace. The media will also restrain from criticism but it observes everything under its microscope. Hence, the new CEOs must be careful to make use of this time wisely to connect with all stakeholders and create a positive impression to survive and succeed in the corporate world.

Problems and Prospects for Insider and Outsider CEOs: Outsider CEOs encounter vastly different kinds of challenges vis-à-vis insider CEOs. Whether one is elevated internally as a CEO or hired externally as a CEO, that individual must embark upon a series of action steps to achieve long-term success. If an individual is hired internally, that person will have both merits and demerits. The merits will include experience, a hands-on knowledge of the organization, and an understanding of the pulse of the people within the organization. The demerits include lack of experience as a CEO and the formidable challenges of undertaking a new role accompanied by a new set of stakeholder perceptions and challenging tasks. If one is hired as a CEO externally, it takes time for that individual to understand the organizational climate and culture. However, one advantage is the freedom from perceptions as people will initially refrain from judgment.

A Blueprint for New CEOs: New CEOs must clearly focus on key areas aggressively. The crux of the issue here is how to identify the areas that need the most attention. Hence, they must identify core areas that need resources and energy, and focus upon them with vigor.

As a new CEO, one is always under scrutiny by all stakeholders. Make sure that the first few days as CEO are highly organized and focused to create an everlasting impression as a

¹ www.sesasia.com/pdf/2006html/the_leaders_100_day.pdf.

² www.bts.com/docs/newsletter/bts-insight-strategy-execution-results.

successful CEO and leader. According to Ram Charan,³ “The majority of CEOs who are fired are not terminated because they lacked vision, but because they failed to engage their own organization in what appeared to be well thought-out strategies.” Hence, new CEOs must take significant precaution to hone clear-cut strategies and link them effectively with solid execution. At the same time, be cautious to present and project yourself professionally as a leader by blending your intelligence, trustworthiness, humaneness, courage, and discipline both proportionately and judiciously. Also, it is imperative to incorporate one’s technical, business, and social acumen.

Osman Sultan, CEO of du Telecom, suggests,⁴ “As a new CEO you must draw a diagram and put yourself in the center. At the top of the vertical line, put your board and shareholders; at the bottom of this line, the management team and employees. On the left of the horizontal line, put what we can call the ‘market-driving factors’ – customers, distributors, industrial partners. On the right, the external, ‘non-market-driving factors’ – regulators, media, academia, and so on. Then quickly identify the people on each of these fronts that you can trust to deliver. This is the radar screen you should look at every morning to ensure that you’re not losing control of any of these things that could snowball very rapidly in any startup. As a CEO, you cannot afford the luxury of not being active on all these fronts.”

For a new CEO who undertakes this challenging role, there are certain dos and don’ts to stand out from others. The following provides a template containing action steps new CEOs should follow to create a positive impact in the minds of all stakeholders:

- Understand various aspects of the company including its vision and mission.
- Meet all stakeholders to find out their expectations and aspirations. If you are an outsider CEO, you must travel widely to connect with them. Get the big picture right.
- Speak less and listen more to identify three major changes you would like to bring out to improve the company’s bottom lines.
- Be transparent to build trust among all stakeholders.
- Don’t follow the strategies of your predecessor as what worked for him/her might not work for you.
- Conduct organizational assessment after receiving input from all relevant sources. Create a CEO template within your mind which must be flexible to execute.
- Craft your own vision and use diversified communication vehicles including emails, memos, videoconferences, and face-to-face meetings to articulate it effectively.
- Identify the priority areas to improve the company bottom lines. Create action plans dividing them into short-term and long-term goals.
- Create a winning formula based on your recreated vision. For instance, Franz Humer, CEO of Hoffmann–La Roche, set the right priorities during his initial period; he persuaded all stakeholders and brought Hoffmann–La Roche from an industry laggard into an industry leader.
- Be a team leader. Build a strong team capitalizing on their strengths and engage team members effectively.

³ http://www.bts.com/news-insights/press-blog/Why_Some_CEOs_Fail_and_Others_Succeed.aspx accessed on July 1, 2013.

⁴ <http://www.strategy-business.com/article/00110?gko=17631&tid=27782251&pg=all> accessed on July 1, 2013.

- Make sure that the employees are rightly placed with their roles and responsibilities to leverage their strengths. At times, good employees are wrongly placed in the organization. Spot and place them properly.
- Integrate the informal and formal elements of the organization.
- Align people, plans, and practices with organizational goals and objectives.
- Replace poor performers by good performers following the sage words of Jim Collins – “have the right people on the bus, and the wrong people off the bus.”
- Encourage innovative ideas among employees.
- Provide feedback to your employees regularly; guide and inspire them.
- Anticipate both internal and external threats and create contingency plans accordingly to counter them effectively.
- Reorganize business lines to enhance operational excellence.
- Accelerate the pace but don’t be in a hurry to cut costs quickly as you will not be able to know where the real problems may lie.
- Be flexible and customize your leadership style as per the company’s vision and mission and the people around you.
- Seek early wins to build your momentum.
- Contemplate how you would like to be remembered ultimately. Do you want to be remembered as a soft, unfair, flexible, or situational CEO or a CEO with a blend of both task and people-orientation? Create your own CEO brand accordingly to stand out from other CEOs.

Whether you become a new CEO of a company or a leader of an industry or political party, you must follow these steps meticulously to achieve your goals and objectives. Manage internal organizational dynamics and external environmental threats effectively. Take your feedback regularly to bring out behavioral changes within you. Learn lessons from your own experiences and from the experiences of others to enhance your leadership effectiveness to soar like an eagle.

A good CEO must be a judicious blend of strategy and execution and possess a proportional blend of business, technical, and social acumen. Hence, the new chief executives must intelligently mix all these qualities; meet all stakeholders; listen to them; create a corporate culture connecting them on one common thread; build effective teams; craft their vision; and articulate it effectively during the first 100 days in the office to achieve long-lasting success in the corporate world. Remember the sage words of Stefan Stern, *Financial Times* business journalist, “CEOs who carry out a big deal in their first year outperform their peers in the long run.”

Build Leadership Pipeline for Women Leaders

Eleanor Roosevelt once remarked, “A woman is like a tea bag, you can’t tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water.” Although leadership is not gender specific, we find very few women leaders globally due to cultural, religious, social, and other discriminatory factors including the proverbial glass ceiling. The good news is that currently women are emerging in significant roles of authority and excelling globally to carve a niche for themselves. Female leaders like Melinda Gates, Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton, Angela Merkel, Sonia Gandhi, Indra Nooyi, Ursula Burns, Meg Whitman, and Sheryl Sandberg stand out due to their extraordinary contributions in their respective areas of skill and knowledge, thus becoming

sources of inspiration for upcoming women leaders. Despite traditional limitations and constraints, women are proving their credentials and capabilities on par with, or excelling, their male counterparts.

Women occupying key leadership positions is gaining momentum in all sectors. However, presently the percentage of women leaders is still low when compared with male leaders. This is basically due to gender discrimination and above all, perceptions of men towards women that prevent women from excelling as global leaders.

Are Women Better Leaders than Men? There is a debate globally whether women are better leaders than men. A research study conducted by Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman shows that the majority of leaders (64%) are still men. Their study substantiates that women are better than men in various aspects. Women have several strengths to their credit and the major six aspects include taking initiative; practicing self-development; displaying high integrity and honesty; driving for results; developing others; and inspiring and motivating others. However, women have more challenges than men such as they are expected in many societies to manage their families, take care of their children, and do other household chores. Additionally, they encounter organizational politics and gender discrimination in the workplace.

Women are basically leaders as it is a well-admitted fact that behind the success of every man there is a woman. Historically, many women led behind the scenes by guiding men. Businesses, too, can improve if they encourage women to lead as they can bring significant value to the table, thus improving organizational bottom lines.

There is a strong feeling that men are promoted due to undemonstrated potential while women are promoted due to performance. This is basically because leadership is synonymous with men, not women. Hence, there must be a shift in the attitude and perception of people toward leadership and women. Both men and women leaders are two sides of the same coin and the coin is incomplete without everyone. Hence, leadership is incomplete without the active participation of women leaders. Global, Inc. must spot, support, and groom women leaders to keep them in the leadership pipeline to achieve organizational excellence and effectiveness.

A Blueprint to Build Women Leaders: Currently, the efforts to fashion women as leaders globally has been met with lukewarm results. Hence, there must be a coherent and unambiguous strategy for grooming women into leadership roles and responsibilities. Here are some of them:

- Encourage girl scouts globally when leadership skills are cultivated early in life.
- Remove the prevailing strong feeling that men are promoted due to potential while women are promoted due to performance.
- There must be coordinated efforts and an integrated approach by all stakeholders — including organizations, women associations, NGOs, and governments — to build women leaders globally to achieve expected objectives.

According to the *Forbes Insights* study with Grant Thornton, more women are occupying leadership positions in the Asian Pacific region and throughout China. The research further shows that the global status for women occupying leadership roles is very promising. However, much needs to be done to prepare women for positions of authority.

Women must work harder to prove themselves to excel as leaders in a patriarchal, male-dominated society. Remember that society cannot grow when one sex is denied equal opportunities. It is essential to let both sexes grow equally based on merit and talent. Empathy and heart are required by men to forge leadership opportunities for women — especially when acknowledging that females constitute half of the world’s population! While men and women are biologically different, this difference cannot be used as a subterfuge to forestall or prevent outright the equal participation of women in all leadership roles. If women participate in leadership roles and responsibilities, we will all discover a better society with abundant prosperity and stability.

Ten Tools to Motivate Your Employees

Employees must be motivated to add value to the products produced and the services rendered in order to improve the bottom lines of their organizations. It is the leaders who should take up this Herculean challenge in the workplace. Here are ten tools and techniques to motivate employees in the workplace:

1. **Apply Different Strokes for Different Employees.** Understand the expectations and aspirations of the employees and determine whether they are motivated by money, power, prestige, promotions, love, and knowledge. Give them what they want; it works well as an effective motivation tool.
2. **Engage Employees Effectively.** Allow employees to participate in decision-making as it enhances employee engagement. Align their efforts and energies towards organizational goals and objectives constantly. They feel that they are part and parcel of the organization and contribute their best.
3. **Empower Your Employees.** Theodore Roosevelt once said, “The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it.” Empowerment gives you ample time to concentrate your energies and efforts on much more significant organizational challenges. It encourages your employees to come out of their comfort zones to think more broadly and to execute their tasks more effectively. It improves the decision-making skills of your employees. It enables them to grow as leaders in the long run, and you can keep them in the leadership pipeline.
4. **Create a Collaborative Mindset.** Collaborative attitudes are better than competitive ones as the former leads to fraternity and enhanced performance while the latter results in envy and ill-feelings among the employees. Collaborative mindsets generate synergy within the system, thus improving the organizational bottom lines.
5. **Encourage Job Rotation.** When superiors place their subordinates in various jobs, they build cross-functional skills and empathize with others by understanding the ground realities. In addition, they will be able to guide others as they learn executing various tasks effectively. Job rotation is indeed a leadership developmental tool as it acquaints employees with various leadership roles and responsibilities and equips them with several skills and abilities, thus developing conceptual skills which are needed for leaders at higher levels.
6. **Praise Publicly.** Catch people doing right things and praise them. It encourages other employees to demonstrate similar behaviors, serves as a motivation tool, and improves performance and productivity — and you earn respect as a leader. In addition, it changes the mindset of the people.

7. **Criticize Privately.** Call the erring employees privately to your office and provide sandwich feedback. Sandwich feedback starts with a positive compliment, follows with comments concerning correction of behavior, and concludes with a positive compliment. It sounds constructive for the receiver and paves the way for better behavior.
8. **Break the Organizational Barriers.** The Gen Y population appreciates working in flat and lean organizations and prefers a collegial model of organizational behavior where there is least gap between superiors and subordinates. The Baby boomers and Gen X must understand this fact and mold their leadership styles accordingly to achieve desired organizational objectives.
9. **Avoid Favoritism.** Build trust and confidence among your employees. Treat all employees equally and with respect. Remember that all employees are equal to you. Keep your personal preferences and tastes away from your professional roles and responsibilities.
10. **Walk Your Talk.** Organizations cannot be run when leaders work from their air-conditioned offices. They can be run only when the leaders interact with the employees regularly and understand their pulse and make decisions accordingly.

Apply these ten tools to motivate your employees to achieve organizational excellence and effectiveness and excel as an effective leader. Stephen Covey rightly remarked, “Always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your best customers.”

Inculcate Soft Leadership Skills to Build a Better World

Leadership basically depends on three aspects: 1) how you communicate with others; 2) how you make decisions; and 3) how you initiate action. When you can execute these three activities effectively, you become a successful leader. However, to evolve as a soft leader, you must communicate with an emphasis on soft skills; make decisions by blending your head, heart, and gut and take action keeping the ground realities and goals in your view without compromising people-orientation. There are 11 Cs that constitute soft leadership. They are: character, charisma, conscience, conviction, courage, communication, compassion, commitment, consistency, consideration, and contribution. It is highly challenging for people to cultivate these 11 characteristics. However, if people possess more than 6 traits, they get into the fold of soft leadership.

How to Excel as a Soft Leader: When you want to excel as a soft leader, there must not be a “character gap,” a “communication gap,” a “commitment gap,” or a “courage gap.” When you stick to these four sutras, you can excel as a soft leader. “Treat the people the way you want to be treated” is the old adage. But as a soft leader, you must treat all people with respect – especially the people who are lower to you in rank and file. The soft leaders possess humility and a servant’s attitude. In Jim Collins’ parlance, they are a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will. They help their people grow exponentially. That is the hallmark of soft leadership.

Build Soft Leaders Globally: Presently, people appreciate partnership rather than traditional command-and-control leadership. They believe in the concept of “give respect and take respect.” There is a drastic change in the mindset of the people globally due to the rapid changes in the technologies. It is essential to explore soft leadership rather the traditional leadership styles which have become outdated.

Hence, build soft leaders in global youth who can emphasize soft skills rather than hard skills; people-orientation rather than task-orientation; transformational leadership rather than transactional leadership; others-centered leadership rather than self-centered leadership – i.e., “*what is it that I can do for others?*” rather than “*what is in it for me?*” to bring smiles and to make a difference in the lives of others.

And, always remember the words of Winston Churchill:

We make a living what by we get; we make a life by what we give.”

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Professor M. S. Rao, Ph.D. is the Father of “Soft Leadership.” He is an International Leadership Guru and an internationally-acclaimed leadership educator, executive coach, speaker, and consultant. He has 34 years of experience, and is the author of 30 books including *21 Success Sutras for Leaders* (<http://www.amazon.com/21-Success-Sutras-Leaders-ebook/dp/B00AK98ELI>), *Success Tools for CEO Coaches: Be a Learner, Leader, and Ladder* (http://bookawards.small_biztrends.com/management-2014/success-tools-for-ceo-coaches-8/) and *Smart Leadership: Lessons for Leaders* (<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00D9S8SCW>). His vision to build one million students as global



leaders by 2030 can be referenced at: http://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.in/2014/12/professor-m-s-raos-vision-2030-one_31.html. His vision program was ranked as one of the Top 10 Finalists in the “Not for Profit” category of Leadership 500 Excellence Awards in 2015. Most of his work is available free of charge in his four blogs: <http://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.in>, <http://profmsr.blogspot.com>, <http://professormsrao.blogspot.com>, and <http://professormsraoguru.blogspot.com>. He can be contacted via e-mail at msrlctr@gmail.com and followed on Twitter at [@professormsrao](https://twitter.com/professormsrao),