

The following activity will take about five minutes to complete. It can be undertaken alone, but will be even more effective if conducted with other members of your organisation.

Where you are asked questions in the text below, take a minute to write down your responses before proceeding. This will accelerate your understanding and allow you to build deeper insight into the topic.

Imagine that you are a member of your company's board of directors (or similar top management level). You are set the task of selecting the next CEO. What are your criteria for making this decision?

Consider the following four, short-listed applicants for the role – which would you choose? **Choose only one.**

John Clanman

John is a people person. He is warm, sensitive to other's needs, and highly effective at motivating others by communicating to their highest aspirations. More a facilitator than a director, John takes a keen interest in building morale, staff capability and the organisation's community connections. Most of his time is spent personally talking to staff and clients, building relationships and mending bridges between people. Under his care, a number of faceless and failing corporations have leveraged off a growing community profile, to move well into the black. He is a father figure, and his organisations are more like an extended family than a workplace. His credo is, "Personal involvement fosters commitment, which in turn leverages performance".

Paul Adho

Paul is cast from the entrepreneur mould. He has had great success running companies in highly volatile markets within the technology and financial services industries. Involved in a number of start-ups, he nurtured all of these into profitability, in record time, through securing and marketing cutting-edge products. A risk taker, he has bet on the wrong horse several times and lost funds of the companies, but he has always bounced back elsewhere through the success of another innovation. Paul is interested exclusively in people who are creative, and energetic in getting their products to market. His business credo is "Grow by getting it to market quick, then move on to the next big thing."

Sue Mark

As a GM, Sue is recognized as a hard performance driver. Her resume includes a number of companies that she brought back from the brink by being ruthless in delivering efficiencies, and winning competitors' customers. Highly competitive, her knowledge of the markets within her industry is second to none. She works hard and expects everyone else to do the same, always with a steely eye on "the big MS" – market share. Sue has no time for "the soft stuff" and benchmarks her own performance against creeping profit margins and hard ROI. Her favourite saying is "I love our competitors - they make me work harder."

Sam Hier

Sam has a background in managing some of the largest and most bureaucratic monoliths in business. Under his methodical eye they have been turned from dinosaurs to demons, transformed from monstrosities that pumped out garbage and paperwork to well-tuned machines that set the quality and productivity benchmarks for their industry. Sam's prime interests are efficiency and reliability, and he believes in designing business processes that ensure both quality and speed. He prefers people who are dependable, cautious and stick to the game plan – mavericks and cowboys need not apply. His most well known quote "Through our controlled systems, we produce a high quality profitable product, again, and again, and again, and again..."

What specific attributes of the person you picked are the most important for your company's CEO? These attributes provide us with some insight into the way that "organisational performance" is defined in your firm.

Interestingly enough, each of the CEO candidates is highly successful in their own way. Our choice between them, therefore, is more dependent on our own values about performance and how it is achieved in our organisational context, than any objective methods of evaluating their likelihood of success. This suggests that each manager, and indeed each organisation, has their own unique definition of organisational performance and leadership success.

Let's see what your choice of CEO indicates about the culture and the nature of effective leadership in your company.

If you chose **John Clanman** as your next CEO:

You are likely to perceive your company as defining organisational effectiveness in terms of team cohesion, staff morale, and developing the capabilities of your people. You are likely to also believe that the most effective leader for your firm would be one who engages personally with people in the roles of a facilitator, a mentor, and a role model.

If you chose **Paul Adho** as your next CEO:

You are likely to perceive your company as defining organisational effectiveness in terms of cutting-edge output, creativity, and growth. You are likely to also believe that the most effective leader for your firm would be one who is a visionary, an innovator, and an entrepreneur.

If you chose **Sue Mark** as your next CEO:

You are likely to perceive your company as defining organisational effectiveness in terms of **winning market share**, and **goal achievement**. You are likely to also believe that the most effective leader for your firm would be one who is a **hard-driver**, a **keen competitor**, and a **producer**.

If you chose **Sam Hier** as your next CEO:

You are likely to perceive your company as defining organisational effectiveness in terms of **efficiency**, **ontime production**, and **smooth functioning**. You are likely to also believe that the most effective leader for your firm would be one who is a **co-ordinator**, a **monitor**, and an **organiser**.

Implications of this insight:

When we understand the way our organisation and our managers define success, we are better able to:

- Set strategic plans such that they leverage the key elements of success, as defined by the organisation
- Design interventions that move organisational cultures to definitions of success that more effectively match their market environment and stakeholder demands
- Plan change management strategies that reduce resistance by building on the elements valued by organisational members
- Induct new managers by drawing attention to the definitions of success for this organisation, and working through where this conflicts with their own definitions
- Build leadership effectiveness by specifically targeting those capabilities most valued within the organisation's definition of success
- Design procedures and work processes that address the weaknesses inherent in our definition of success