

*Dr. Waite hopes this book will provide more clarity on the topic of leadership. Dr. Waite thoughtfully analyzes fifteen of the top leadership attributes in the world today and carefully weighs them against 29 historical leaders in order to gain more insight into the best practices in hiring and promotional processes.*

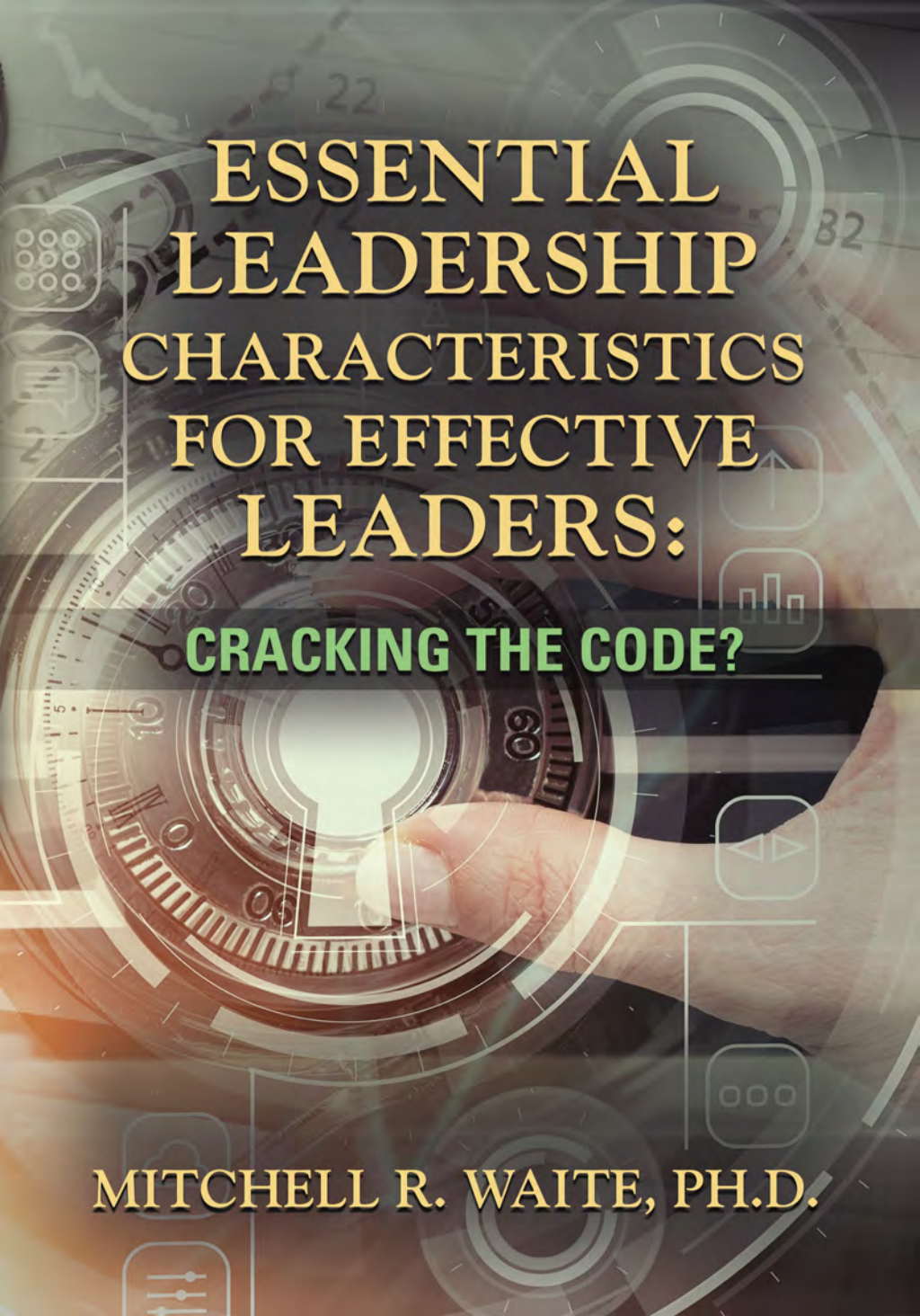
# ***ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERS: CRACKING THE CODE?***

By MITCHELL R. WAITE PhD

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The background of the cover is a close-up of a hand turning a combination lock dial. The dial is metallic and has numbers 0-9. A hand is visible on the right side, with a finger turning the dial. Overlaid on the image are various semi-transparent digital and technical elements: a grid of circles in the top left, a speech bubble in the middle left, a bar chart in the middle right, a play button in the bottom right, and various lines and numbers scattered throughout, giving it a high-tech, 'cracking the code' feel.

# ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERS: **CRACKING THE CODE?**

MITCHELL R. WAITE, PH.D.

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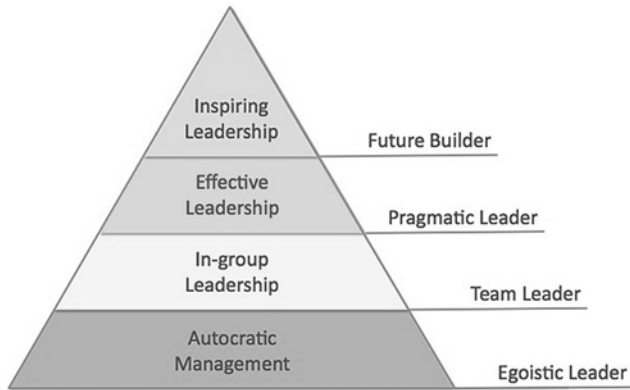
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# CHAPTER 1

## WHAT WE KNOW TO DATE



### Leaders: Hierarchy of Efficiency

I. Kokcharov 2019

Figure 7 - Let's be crystal clear - It's all about leadership

Dependent upon your sources, leadership is a topic that has undergone great scrutiny and research over the many centuries. Over the past few decades literally thousands of studies have been conducted in an attempt to explain what leadership is all about. There are a multitude of businesses and individuals that teach, advise, and consult with organizations on the topic of leadership. Yet, despite all of these studies and expertise in the world today, there is no one definitive study, one magic formula to define what a leader is, or a viable explanation of how effective leaders can be replicated or cloned.

Perhaps all of this confusion on such an important topic might suggest that there are simply too many variables to consider in relation to effectively citing a comprehensive conclusion. While society today loves quick solutions, and many employers would love to replicate its most effective leaders, and hire and promote only the best and brightest, this quite simply is not occurring in many organizations. This may indeed be because there is no easy solution to a problem as complex as this. We also understand that the human mind is a very complex area of study, and while psychology has progressed over the decades, it is still not a perfect science.



Figure 8 – Instant gratification

As the author of this book I will not suggest that I have all of the answers. However, as a social scientist I will attempt to give a plausible explanation based upon my years of education and experience in leadership, incorporate and build upon existing research, and correspondingly add some different perspectives in an attempt to move the study of leadership further down the road.

To illustrate the complexity of this topic, Walter Bennis and Burt Nanus provided an interesting perspective by stating:

Never have so many labored so long to say so little. Multiple interpretations of leadership exist, each providing a sliver of insight but each remaining an incomplete and wholly inadequate explanation. Most of these definitions don't agree with each other, and many of them would seem quite remote to leaders whose skills are being dissected. Definitions reflect fads, fashions, political tides and academic trends. They don't always reflect reality and sometimes they just represent nonsense. It's as if what Braque once said about art is also true of leadership: The only thing that matters in art is the part that cannot be explained. (2)



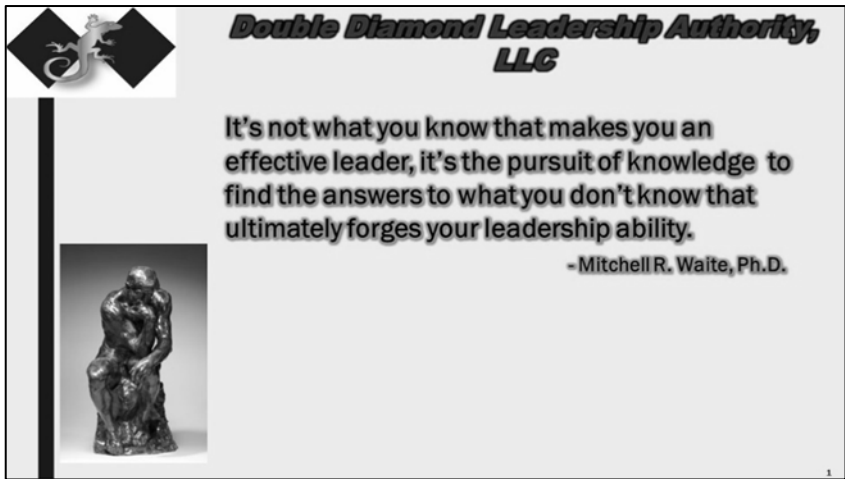


Figure 9 – What makes an effective leader?

Albert Einstein is one of my favorite historical characters. He once stated that he was not that much different than everyone else, but the major difference between he and others was that he stayed with complex problems for a longer period of time in order to solve them. This takes great persistence, patience, and focus. Unfortunately, in our society today, with entitled mindsets, instant gratification, easy button solutions, and multiple distractions, such virtues are not that abundant today!

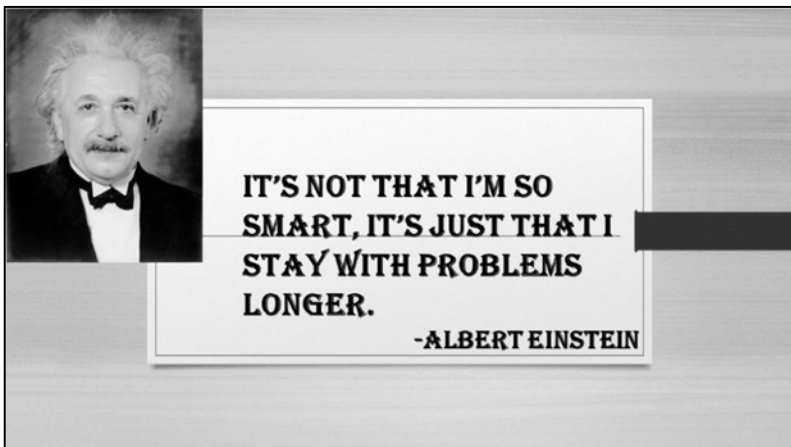


Figure 10 – Persistence is a virtue

While I have already authored three books on the topic of leadership and spent hours reading and researching this subject, it was in that research that I have laid the foundation of theories and traits associated with leadership. While I enjoyed writing these books, they merely offered a broad swathe on the topic of leadership. I had so much to say on the subject that I tried to do it all in one book! While I think this methodology is good to give people a generalized flavor on the topic of leadership, in this particular book I will focus on the aspect of leadership traits in greater depth. Certainly, I am not the first author to attempt this and will not be the last. However, my efforts here are to mesh already established research on the subject of leadership, such as the GLOBE studies, incorporate attributes I believe effective leaders need based upon my extensive experience and education on the topic, and compare and contrast these Top 15 leadership characteristics, as well as the Bottom 5 attributes, weighed against the attributes of 29 historical leaders, or at a minimum, people who held significant leadership positions. However, once armed with this information, I will then embark upon unveiling an instrument that employers may use to help them hire the best and brightest, promote the most qualified, and set their organizations up for long-term success, including succession planning.

While some of you may have read my previous books, or read the cover jacket for this book, I would also state that to qualify my observations and theories I base this foundation upon 42 years of military service, 26 years in the fire service, and a doctoral degree specializing in leadership and organizational change. I would also state that while education is a great knowledge multiplier, the majority of my time in the military and fire service was gaining valuable experiential lessons by holding various key leadership positions. Armed with this life experience and educational background, I believe I speak from a position of strength. However, I will be the first to emphasize that while I know a great deal about the topic of leadership, I certainly will never profess to know everything. Anyone who claims to do so is delusional and too self-absorbed to offer an objective perspective on any topic!

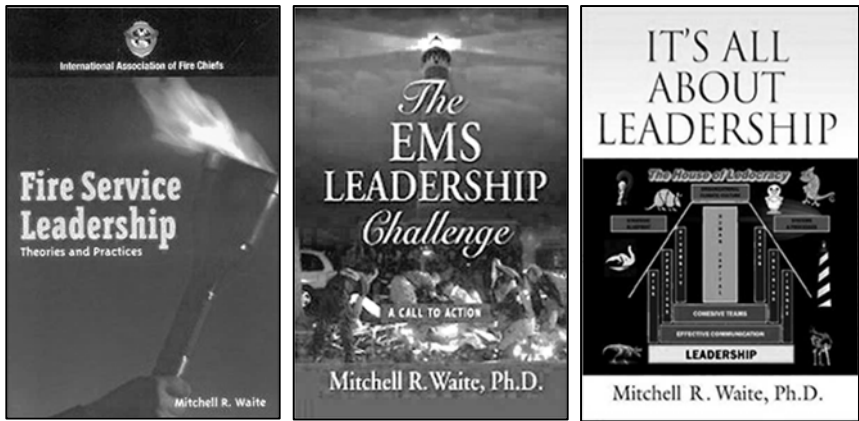


Figure 11 – Good books on leadership practices

## LEADERSHIP STUDIES

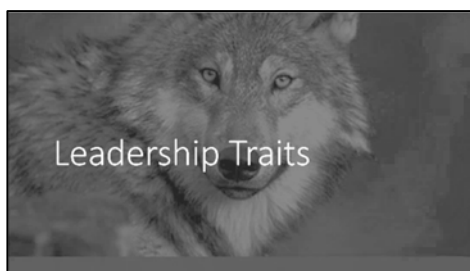


Figure 12 – Leadership traits

One of the studies I will use to build the foundation for my conclusions extends over a period of decades and was conducted by a group of researchers who studied leadership characteristics throughout the world. This team queried several thousand people from upper, mid, and lower-level management positions to get their opinion concerning the most desirable leadership attributes. While I do not recall if this team of researchers asked employees who were not in leadership positions the same questions, it would certainly make sense to do so. After all, leaders need followers in order to be effective, and while those not in a leadership position may not have an experiential advantage at that point in their career, such a perspective is as important as those occupying leadership positions. The reason I state this is because if followers have a different perspective than does the leadership, then there is already a significant disconnect which should not exist between a leader and his/her followers.

While I have referenced the GLOBE study in my past books, I just finished reading the most current study which was published in 2014, and the most current version of this study validates much of what the team concluded in previous studies. The most consistent universal attributes continue to be trustworthiness, dynamism, intelligence, decisiveness, and dependability. I would undoubtedly concur that these attributes are important for any leader to possess, but these same qualities employers would desire in any employee.

Based upon the top five universally accepted attributes, can you separate the leader from the follower? Perhaps not, but peeling back the onion even more may yield more significant differences.



## Peeling back the onion

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Figure 13 – To dig deeper, you must peel back the onion

Some attributes that are more necessary for leaders to possess than their followers are: good communicators, well-informed, motivational, positive, adept problem solvers, visionaries, and motivators. Such distinction we will explore in greater depth in a later chapter, but as important as it is to identify the more positive characteristics of an effective leader, we must also examine those characteristics which undermine the effectiveness of any leader.

Characteristics such as conflict avoidance, micromanaging, being subdued, possessing a domineering and a dictatorial demeanor have always been impediments to effective leadership. Bear in mind that not that long ago, autocratic leadership was the prevalent style and the style with which I grew up. But as society and generations shift and change, so too should a leader's style. This often leads to great discussions on which leaders from yesteryear would be effective in today's environment? While I consider myself decisive, through my years of education and experience I have also determined that there are no absolutes in most things, other than death and taxes as the old adage goes! With this disclaimer now established, my answer to the question about yesteryear's leaders and if they could be effective in today's environment is: it depends! The reason I give this response is because while some traits are universal in nature—such as honesty which has always played well across all cultures—other

characteristics may have been more effective during a specific era and may not be as effective today, such as autocracy for example.

I like to use Vince Lombardi as an example during my leadership classes as it normally brings about great discussion. In addition, I am a life-long Packers fan and great admirer of Vince Lombardi who I believe gets great credit for being a successful football coach, but not enough credit for being an outstanding leader of people. While I never met Coach Lombardi, I have read a great deal about him and listened to former players talk of him. However, as a writer myself, I also realize that often it is left to the interpretation of the author as to what is placed in print. Much like channel surfing today, whereas if you switch between Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, the BBC, and the many other channels offered today, you will likely be able to figure out the ground truth, as opposed to just watching one channel! So, while I ask not that you agree with my interpretation on Mr. Lombardi, I ask that you check references and sources for yourself and determine your own interpretation.

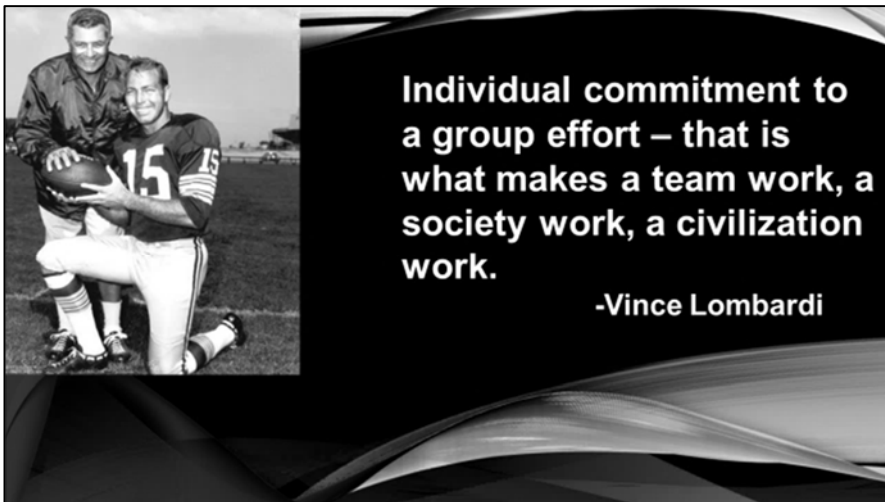


Figure 14 – Leadership must meet opportunity

There is little debate that Coach Lombardi was very decisive and left little doubt who was in charge. He was more of an autocrat than a participatory leader, but again, that was the prevalent style for that period of time. Then the debate turns to, should a team adapt to a coach's style, or

should the coach adapt to the team? Well, much like any other type of relationship, I would state that it is probably a little of both, or a two-way street. I would also state that I am a huge proponent of adaptive leadership, or what I term “chameleon-like” leadership. This means that a leader knows what style to use, when to use it, whom to use it on, and the particular situation when such a style will be more effective. This is part of the art of leadership that few people ever master. While we will never know the answer to the question posed in regard to if Coach Lombardi would be as successful today as when he actually coached, my belief is that he would be. I believe the proof lies in his ability to adapt to the players he coached. When coaching the Packers, the Packer sweep became legendary during his tenure. When he went on to coach the Washington Redskins, he did not have the same personnel, so he adapted to more of a passing game because he had Sonny Jurgensen as quarterback, who was a more prolific passer. His former players could certainly better answer the question, but I believe he could do it as well as if not better than Bill Belichick has in New England who has been extremely successful in this era.

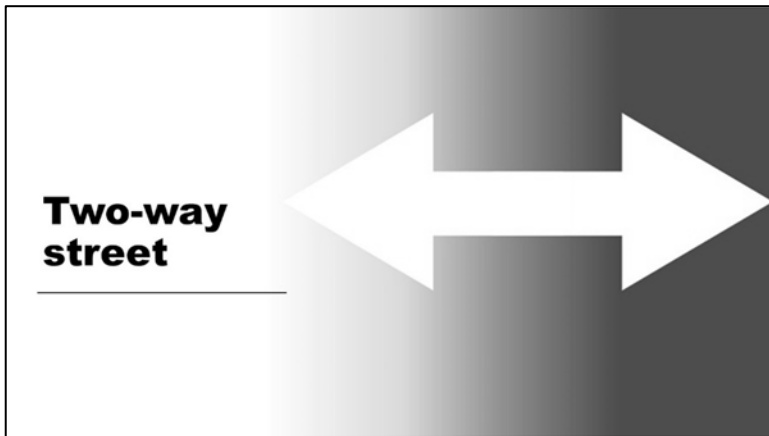


Figure 15 – True leadership is a two-way street

I believe the GLOBE studies do an excellent job of bringing us data on leadership in relation to attributes and characteristics. Having the correct attributes or skill sets for any occupation is always a critical factor in success. The trait factor has also been one of the more prevalent leadership theories for some time now, even though it is not the only theory. While I outline many of the leadership theories in my previous books in greater

depth, I would now state that trying to define or confine a topic so diverse and complex into one theory is science's way to explain something or add logic to the solving of a problem.

Perhaps the real reason why even the experts have a difficult time defining leadership is because it cannot be contained in one specific theory! Much like the course of any river changes over time, the water still flows because it cannot be contained unless by a man-made structure such as a dam or levee, which have also been known to fail from time to time! For centuries the "great man theory" was believed to explain leadership. Basically, this theory suggested that for an individual to become an effective leader, one would need to be born of royal blood, or be a 'silver spooner' as I term those born into money. I would have to state that without doubt or hesitation one has to have an opportunity to exhibit leadership ability. For some it may come through having more opportunities than others. Take a close look at the background of many of those in Congress and you will find many who are attorneys, or who have money or the financial backing to run for a national position. This same opportunity is not provided to everyone, and you simply just need to breakdown the composition of Congress (535 members) and compare this to the composition of the American populace (est. at 350 million). I am not certain your interpretation of the facts will conclude with equal representation for all! What happened to equal opportunity in Congress? If this elite group have not walked in your shoes, how can they possibly relate their own experiential background to go about solving the more complex problems facing our society today?





Figure 16 – The evolvement of a river equates to leadership progression

Some very intelligent people have concluded that perhaps the best leaders in our history are not even known to us! The interpretation here is that there are many effective leaders that actually are out in society doing great things for their organizations that we simply have not heard about because good news is not that newsworthy to much of the mainstream media! Furthermore, there are many people who possess the proper skill sets to solve complex problems and who could provide effective leadership, but they are simply never given the opportunity! This may further raise the question to anyone reading this book, what does your organization do in regard to hiring potential leaders and promoting the most qualified? Some companies do a great job, while many others do not. How do I go about drawing such a conclusion? I observe, I see the quagmire known as Washington not really working for us, I talk to the many thousands of students I have taught over four decades, and I conduct research. I know for the most part, people with money get elected to key positions in this country. I know the good old boy network is still alive and well in this country which really inhibits the evolution of female leadership. I know racism plays a part in our supposedly evolved society and minorities do not get as fair of an opportunity as do others. While equal opportunity has helped to even these odds, this also is not a perfect system and, in some cases, reverse discrimination occurs and so the most qualified do not get

hired or promoted in order to balance the EO books! As I mentioned previously, I was proud and honored to have served our country for 42 years in the United States Marine Corps and United States Army. However, while there are so many great things about our military, even they do not always promote the best and brightest. I am uncertain that there is a perfect promotional system in existence today, but I do know that there are more effective methods to hire and promote people if those decision makers would simply take the time and energy to pursue them.

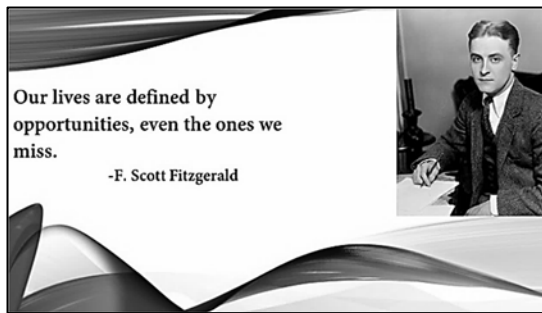


Figure 17 – Some people who may be great leaders never get the opportunity

## MYERS-BRIGGS TYPOLOGY

In my research and quest to discover the elusive answer to the nagging question of what attributes comprise an effective leader and why can they not be replicated more frequently, I decided to utilize some other current and well accepted research on personality typing such as the Myers-Briggs assessment. While I did use some scholarly sites to gather my information, I also used some not so scholarly sites, yet nevertheless good sources of information. I tried to triangulate the truth using this methodology, and while perhaps not crystal in its presentation, I do believe it portrays an accurate enough depiction of the individuals I researched for the purposes of this project.

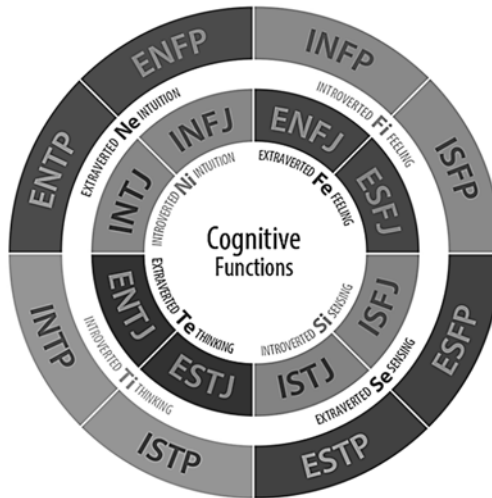


Figure 18 – Myers-Briggs personality typology

Using the Top 15 and Bottom 5 leadership attributes from the GLOBE studies and my research, IQ scores that could be attained, and the 16 Myers-Briggs personality types, I weighed this data against 29 leaders or heads of state, who according to many different sites were or are considered leaders or at a minimum, held a leadership position. Please bear in mind that I will outline these personalities in greater detail in Chapter 3, but many of the individuals named are famous people—some were more effective than others, some were considered bad leaders, and others quite

frankly simply occupied a leadership position and had few desirable leadership attributes!

In fact, of the 29 people I researched, there were twenty-three males and six females, and twelve were minorities. While I did attempt to make the numbers more balanced, the majority of sites listing historical leaders focused on many more males than females, which should already inform you of the inequity in historical recognition and perhaps a consideration for the future! The attempt at trying to link personality types to universally accepted attributes was not easy. However, nothing worthwhile is ever easy and even if the link could not be made, insight into the world of leadership could still be gained. I learned through my doctoral studies and time as a fire investigator that proving a theory correct is not the only methodology to gain valuable information. Sometimes disproving a theory also provides keen insight into a topic, or much like a fire investigator when searching for the source of a fire, sometimes it is through the process of elimination that you may get to the ground truth!

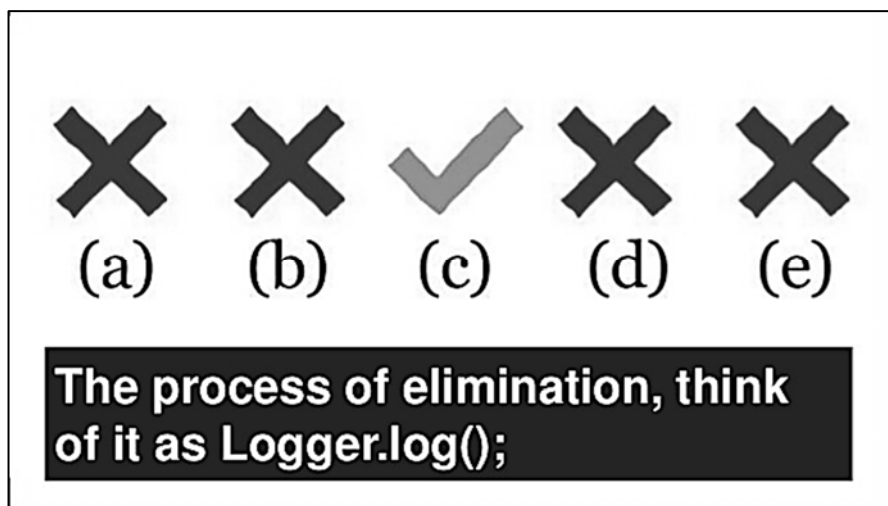


Figure 19 – Trying to gain greater clarity

I am also utilizing an old field artillery concept I learned as a combat medic many years ago. This concept is known as bracketing. Today technology does much to aid the direction of artillery shells, but several decades ago a self-propelled 155mm Howitzer could launch a shell

anywhere from 8 to 15 miles downrange. They would fire one shot and then Forward Observers with eyes on the target would radio back where the shell actually hit. At that point, adjustments in elevation and deviation would be made, after which another shell would be launched. This practice would continue until the shells were hitting the target, at which point the entire battery of Howitzers would fire on the target in an effort to destroy it. Of course, a moving target was much harder to hit, but this bracketing concept I am employing for this project by using not only good attributes which define a leader, but also poor characteristics that should throw up some red flags to people making hiring or promotional decisions.



Figure 20 – Bracketing concept

While the reader of this book or other leadership experts may disagree upon the 29 individuals identified, the fifteen attributes selected, some of the assumptions which had to be made due to the lack of overwhelming evidence, or any other data used for this project, I would suggest that such people conduct their own research and draw their own conclusions to share with others in order to move the subject of leadership further forward.

So to summarize Chapter 1 and establish the backdrop for the remainder of the book, the attempt here is to establish a little more concrete footing as to what constitutes effective leadership, why it has been so difficult to replicate great leaders thus far, and how leaders today can use this information to benefit themselves and their organizations. In order to frame this attempt, I researched 29 individuals who according to many different sites held key leadership positions at some point in history. I also used existing and universally accepted research in regard to the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) studies and Myers-Briggs assessments to assist with this project. I used my vast experience and education on the topic of leadership to draw linkages and conclusions. Again, I would frame this discussion with the fact that my experiences and education are not infinite. I would add that many other outstanding scholars have attempted to crack the code of leadership to assist others who so choose to teach, train, develop, and mentor aspiring leaders. However, as the multiple variables of an individual's personality, life experiences, opportunities in life, and focused training on the topic of leadership, the complexities of achieving an assembly line in which to manufacture effective leaders has yet to be accomplished. Much as I attempt to do in my business of training and developing leaders, I simply take a different approach to the challenge at hand. The ultimate goal, considering the fact that many organizations and academic institutions can teach the science of leadership, but few I have found can teach the much grayer area concerning the art of leadership, is to discover the finer points as to what it is that truly separates the great leaders from the good, and the good from the bad!

Some who might read this book may disagree with some of the 29 individuals due to politics or actual experience with some of the people mentioned, which I can empathize with and appreciate. However, there are times when dealing with controversial or sensitive topics can lead to greater clarity and understanding. So, while many of the leaders listed in this book appeared on many of the leadership lists I researched, a few also appeared on some of the 'most evil leaders in history' lists!

The point here is not to develop 'gator brain' when reading this book! Gator brain is a concept used in critical thinking classes I instruct outlined in the book *Think Better* written by Tim Hurson (3). Gator brain is basically a negative reaction to a word, phrase, name, or concept. We have observed a lot of this state of being throughout history and it lives on today! Critical

thinking is a higher level of thought whereby you listen to the perspective of others, contemplate the information weighed against your own biases and opinions, and then formulate your own ideas. While such critical thinking may not change your opinion on a topic, it may also lead to greater understanding. So, I do believe we can learn as much from poor leaders, or more appropriately stated, people who have occupied leadership positions without the requisite skill sets to be successful, as we can learn from good leaders. I preferred this contrast and comparison to frame my points to better bracket desirable leadership characteristics, rather than simply present a panacea of great leaders. To me, this would simply be too unifocal and I prefer a more multi-dimensional approach when examining a topic.



Figure 21 – Don't get Gator Brain!

I would also state that this book is an attempt to simplify a complex topic so that it may be understood by more people. When you read professional journals, scholarly articles, or research material, much of what is written on paper is difficult to decipher. Such code does not relate well to the majority of people on the planet. So, this book is an attempt to break things down a bit more in order to reach more people.

Finally, after we navigate through the research and the approach used to draw certain conclusions, I will then attempt to reference some effective tools that current and future leaders might use to improve performance, enhance organizational climate, and set up their organizations for long-term success. The journey to get to that point of success takes time, patience, persistence, and focused determination. Effective leadership is not easy. If it were, we would have many more in the world today!

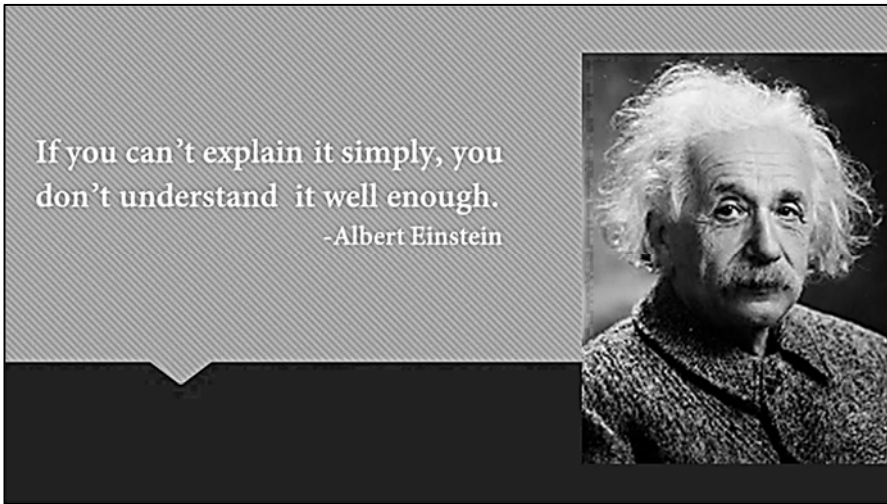


Figure 22 - Let's simplify the complex



## **AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

Dr. Waite earned his doctorate from Walden University in Applied Management and Decision Sciences with a specialization in Leadership and Organizational Change.

As a fire chief (retired) and commissioned officer (retired Colonel) in the United States Army, Dr. Waite has a proven track record in the field of leadership.

His creative and innovative approaches led to organizational success for the Wisconsin Rapids (WI) Fire Department and several military units he commanded.

Dr. Waite was a member of the fire service for over 26 years and a member of the United States military for 42 years.

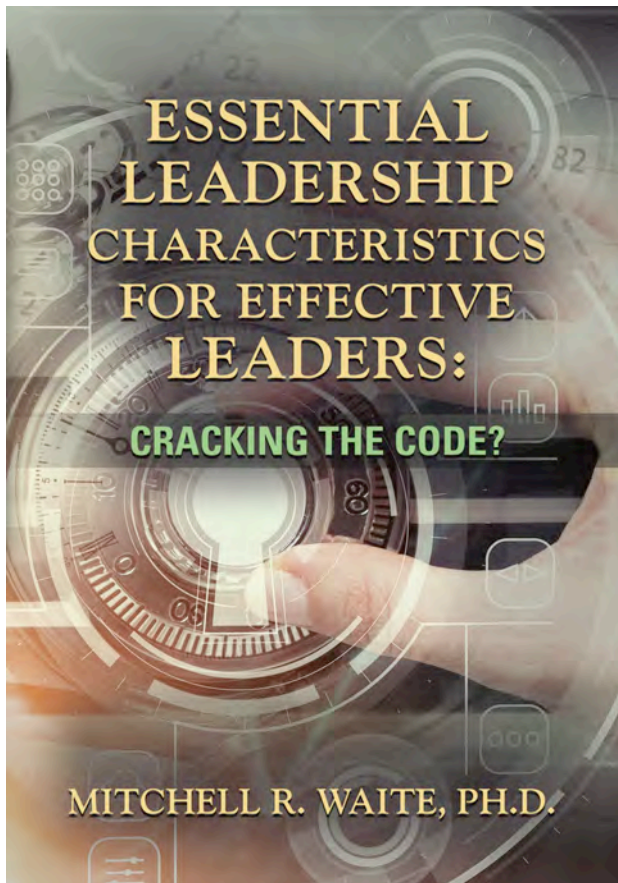
Dr. Waite has also been a visiting professor for over 34 years and instructs traditional, online, and blended courses for several universities. Some of his areas of instruction are: leadership, corporate management, strategic planning, and organizational effectiveness.

Since his retirement from the fire service and the military, Dr. Waite has continued his lifetime of service by becoming a member of Saratoga (WI) EMS, a FEMA Safety Advisor, an instructor with Team Rubicon, a contract instructor for the National Fire Academy, a member of his county's Critical Incident Stress Management Team, and an active member of his local VFW and American Legion.

Dr. Waite is also the founder and President of the Double Diamond Leadership Authority, LLC which specializes in leadership development and training, and executive level recruitment ([www.doublediamondleadership.org](http://www.doublediamondleadership.org)).

Dr. Waite has also authored four other books, *Fire Service Leadership – Theories and Practices* (2008); *The EMS Leadership*

*Challenge – A Call to Action (2009); 400 Days – A Call to Duty (2010); and It's All About Leadership (2016).*



*Dr. Waite hopes this book will provide more clarity on the topic of leadership. Dr. Waite thoughtfully analyzes fifteen of the top leadership attributes in the world today and carefully weighs them against 29 historical leaders in order to gain more insight into the best practices in hiring and promotional processes.*

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