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PDI Pulse on Leaders Study Uncovers the Traits and Experiences that Differentiate CEOs from Other Leaders

Gaining More Experience in Areas of High Visibility, Risk and Growing the Business May Help Realize CEO Aspirations

MINNEAPOLIS (March 11, 2008) – A recent *Pulse on Leaders* study by Personnel Decisions International (PDI) analyzed data on a group of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) to find out what makes them different from other leaders. The study found traits that differentiate CEOs from other executive leaders include cutting through complexity, high energy levels, desire to be in charge and ability to persuade others.

When it comes to negative characteristics, the research also shows that CEOs are less passive-aggressive and do less micro-managing.

“Many of the best and brightest business leaders have a drive to get to the CEO level. We wanted to examine what the select few who make it to the top possess that others lack,” said PDI’s Stuart Crandell, Ph. D., vice president and practice leader. “We also discovered the few who became CEO often had more experiences in areas that are high visibility, high risk and grow the business. These could help accelerate an executive to the CEO spot.”

“Today’s CEOs have the weight of the world on their shoulders – keeping a business viable and successful in changing economic circumstances, meeting board and shareholder expectations and predicting consumer preferences that could change the direction of the company. This research gives us some insight into what kind of person can lead at this level,” added PDI’s Bob Muschewske, senior vice president and executive consultant and PDI’s top consultant for CEOs.

For the study, PDI took a sample of 148 CEOs who participated in PDI assessments. The CEOs were compared to a much larger sample of 9,226 leaders. This group included leaders from senior executives to first-level leaders who were also assessed by PDI.

CEOs demonstrated a higher ability to understand complex, ambiguous information by analyzing and detecting systematic themes. “Due to the nature of the role, CEOs need to be able to digest a great deal of information quickly and determine which pieces of information indicate trends or themes that are important to the business. Finding vital information from seemingly unsystematic or extraneous information is an essential skill in running a business and predicting potential challenges,” said Muschewske.

“Another trait that CEOs share is a higher energy level. Looking at any daily schedule of today’s CEOs makes it very clear why this is a necessary trait for success,” Muschewske said. “Not only do CEOs need to handle a hectic schedule, they need to naturally prefer an extreme amount of activity and not depend on downtime to recharge.”

Two other traits that CEOs display more than other leaders is the desire to be in charge and the ability to be persuasive. “You have to want to be at the top to be a successful CEO. This is not a role you want to

accidentally fall into. Top leaders are comfortable calling the shots, persuading others about the decisions they think are right and taking the responsibility that goes along with the power position,” said Muschewske.

“Of course, possessing these traits alone does not guarantee one will make it to the CEO position. It also doesn’t mean that if you lack these traits, you cannot fit the role. The other crucial component for the top job is having the right set of career experiences,” said Crandell. “For those with their eye on the CEO job, experiences that are high risk with potential high return for the company and experiences that are highly visible throughout the organization tend to help an individual be prepared to take on the responsibilities of leading the company.”

MEDIA NOTE

Look for future data releases from the *PDI Pulse on Leaders*.

The *PDI Pulse on Leaders* analyzes different workplace questions on a regular basis and can be used as a source for gaining insight on the inner values of talent management and leadership development.

ABOUT PERSONNEL DECISIONS INTERNATIONAL

Personnel Decisions International (PDI) is a global leadership consulting firm with distinctive expertise in building leadership talent that provides real competitive advantage. With more than 700 team members in 30 offices around the globe, PDI partners with the world's leading organizations, enabling them to make consistently effective talent decisions about leaders.

Using field-tested strategies and tools that are unique in the industry - we help clients identify, develop, and deploy superior leaders. Our aim is simple - the well-placed confidence that clients’ current and future leaders are distinctively stronger than the competition, resulting in sustained, superior performance. For more information, contact PDI client relations at 920.997.6995 (in the U.S. 800.633.4410) or visit PDI's Web site at www.personneldecisions.com.

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