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had been a graphic designer for years and he was happy. His role had become easy and fairly he could do his job in his sleep. Michele, who was the second-best designer in the office, was really blossoming and showing some true leadership skills, yet with Jim in the way the director of the newspaper couldn't very well promote Michele without ruffling some feathers.

The director had talked with Jim several times about leadership and he just really wasn't interested. The managing editor position had just become vacant, and the director was thinking of putting Michele in that position to test her leadership skills since she didn't really have any editing experience and there were others in that department who were qualified but he really wanted to give Michele a chance and thought she deserved it. Today he was going to announce Michele as the new managing editor and the only problem was going to be how to break the news to those other editors who would be surprised. He was on his way to personnel to strategize about the announcement.

Have't you been there? Thinking you have the job when out of the blue comes someone from outside the company or a completely unrelated department who snatches the job right out from under you? Perhaps we all have been victim to this phenomenon of accidental leadership when someone is promoted to a position for which they are not necessarily qualified, or placed. Can you be a leader by accident? Absolutely, it happens all the time.

In promotion and firing decisions, the rule of thumb is often not a rule at all but more of a guess. Senior and middle managers place employees in roles for which they might have the right skills, but perhaps not the right credibility. These positions employees in roles in which they might have knowledge to impart and teach but not the ability to teach as well as they perform. So how do you promote and make leaders in an organization on purpose, instead of by accident? Answer these questions prior to making your next promotion or firing decision:

Do they have the skills for the job?

This question is an age-old one that is answered often, but not usually correctly. The skills for the job extend far beyond the ability to run the software, use Microsoft Word

or sell a copy. Do they have the skills to lead, guide, motivate, manage, and dispense rewards and consequences to those they will be leading? Do they have the emotional intelligence skills to defer their own emotions for the greater good or a better solution? Do they have the people skills to manage conflict among the team, handle a major change in the organization or calm a client down in an escalation? These are the skills that make great leaders. The computer software program you can teach easily, the other skills can take months of development and sometimes years of experience or trial and error.

Do they have credibility from the team?

This quality is an elusive one as it relies on the perception of those the leader would be leading. Do the team members of the leader's potential position think the person has any credibility? Would he or she be respected? Would he or she be able to handle a job who has far more peers, but far less interest in management or leadership, if he talked at the promotion? Credibility is a compilation of experience, tenure, expertise, flexibility and attitude, most of which cannot be taught in an on-the-job training environment. For so many leaders are promoted in what can be called the "life jacket approach" in which the leader is put in a position, pushed off the edge of the pool and told to swim. If they make it, so does the team, if they fail so does the team. Why put people in these positions without first investigating if he or she has the credibility to command the team, and if not, helping them develop it over time?

CAN YOU BECOME A LEADER BY ACCIDENT?

Do they have a "brooding" or "fixated" quality?

Today's employees are showing us more and more that they want to be valued and considered a vital part of the team or organization. First things first, a Steven Covey look, details the skills needed to be a value-driven person, looking at the value of a mission, a project or a person prior to taking action. Those who adhere more to the end of philosophy are more likely to create a loyal following of well-developed, highly motivated employees who complete less and wish to step into a stronger

Team who adhere to the fixated philosophy are likely to make snap decisions without considering a larger picture and likely to be reactive instead of proactive and will likely have a following of employees with similar reaction patterns who see that the positive reinforcement for the end of behavior is a promotion. Thus those with a fixated philosophy develop employees with that same philosophy and the entire spectrum of reactionary behavior becomes contagious. Which would you rather have more of?

No matter the questions you ask of those you intend to promote or the questions asked of those promoted about you, there will be times when those who fall into or are put into leadership will get there "by accident" rather than because they have earned it. One way to combat this is by preparing a level of candidates for the role of leadership before a crisis or need. In order to be successful leaders must have strong communication skills, reading skills, interpersonal behaviors, and the ability to create trust, earn respect and give people to grow. Most of us did not acquire those skills or behaviors by accident. Why would we expect that being given a title would suddenly make them appear? Only with intention and preparation can one truly become an effective leader with intention and purpose. **HR**

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