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President's Message Leadership

by **Bruce R. Williams**
MAGCS President

Several popular traits come to mind when we think of leadership. Most leaders are intelligent, honest, determined, socially alert, and dominant. While almost all leaders exhibit these attributes, this does not determine whether or not a leader will be weak or strong. There are four additional companion sets of key attributes that clearly separate strong leaders from weak ones.

The first set of positive attributes is defined as functional competence. Functional competence relates to the breadth and depth of knowledge and experience a leader has about his industry or business. A leader with a high functional competence has a strong reputation and track record and comprehensive knowledge of the industry in which the business competes. He knows the business inside and out — its strengths and weaknesses, its culture, and its key players. The strong leader knows what it takes to gain a competitive advantage and keep his business at the forefront of the industry. Strong leaders rate exceptionally high on functional competence; average and weak leaders rate much lower.

Direction setting is another set of positive attributes prominent among strong leaders. This includes a group of leadership behaviors that establish direction and move the business toward a predetermined strategic position. Leaders rating high in direction setting challenge the status quo. They inspire a shared vision by creating the vision and getting others enthusiastically involved. They enable others to act by encouraging collaboration and empowering people, and they lead by example. They also encourage others through recognition and rewards.

Another attribute prominent among strong leaders is a set of leadership skills. These skills include persuasiveness, speaking, self-planning, group planning, creativity, diplomacy, listening, analytical and conceptual skills, and decision-making. Strong leaders are rated as highly proficient in these areas.

Personality traits are commonly used as predictors of leadership success. Certain traits appear to positively influence leadership performances. The trait set consists of persistence, achievement, decisiveness, energy, self-confidence, and assertiveness, and being forward-looking, imaginative, and inspiring.

Many of the aforementioned attributes do not come naturally and need to be developed to be an effective leader. I have tried to develop and improve those skills over the past several years. It has been the most enjoyable and exciting time of my life. Leading the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents has presented me the opportunity to develop personally, professionally, and as a leader, I want to thank the membership for their support and confidence over the years. I am extremely excited about the future of our great organization. I will offer my continued support to Ray Schmitz and our new Board of Directors.