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from
MBA
to
CEO

**THE JOB OF THE CEO AND
HOW YOU GET IT**

Editora Val de Mar

From MBA to CEO

The Job of the CEO and how you get it

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REFLECTION, EVALUATION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT TESTS

If your dream is to become a CEO, we suggest that you sit down with somebody who know you very well, and work through the seven self-assessment tests in this chapter. This person should be a mentor, a senior colleague or a search consultant should you already have a relationship with one. The people who help you with this assessment must be brutally honest, frank and objective—and you must be honest with yourself. Embarking on a CEO career without having what it takes and without being willing to do what it takes can only lead to frustration.

We do not suggest that you put the results on an Excel spreadsheet and score each characteristic on a scale from 0–10 to find an average score within two decimal places; rather, we suggest that you use the traffic light concept to very carefully mark each point in one of three colours, namely green, amber and red.

The result of your assessment tests will fall broadly into three categories. One is where every indication is that you do have what it takes (mainly green). The other is that it is very clear that you do not have it (too many reds). If you are in the middle (mostly green but with quite a few amber lights and perhaps one or two reds) you should try to assess whether you believe

that you can improve enough on your weak points to embark on a CEO career track.

Even if you ‘fail’ in one or more of the self-assessment tests, we recommend that you go through all seven of them. Completing all of the tests and evaluating the results together with your mentor will be valuable for your future career—even should you decide not pursue a CEO track.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST 1

WHY DO YOU WANT TO BECOME A CEO?

The first assessment test is about finding out what drives you to consider a career with the ambition to one day becoming a CEO.

TEST 1	First you need to determine your motives:
TYPE A:	I am primarily driven by the urge to prove my abilities and to work in a team <input type="checkbox"/>
TYPE B:	I am primarily driven by money and power <input type="checkbox"/>

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If you honestly feel that you are a Type A person, you have passed the test as it is our experience that Type A CEOs generally have more successful careers than Type B potential CEOs.

If you are a typical Type B person, we suggest that you seriously reconsider your motives. If your prime motive is money, power and recognition, you might be able to get a CEO job; however, chances are that you will not become a long-lasting and successful CEO.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST 2

ARE YOU WILLING TO DO WHAT IT TAKES TO BECOME A GLOBAL CEO?

The second assessment you should do is to go through our list of 'sacrifices' that you must be willing to make. Ideally, you should not see them as sacrifices because you love what you do and you learn so much. A green light means that you accept whilst a red light means that you do not accept the so-called 'sacrifices'.

The list comes as a package. You cannot pick and choose. In other words, you must ideally find all 11 items exciting and natural to deserve a GREEN light. Too many AMBER lights is a concern. If you have some RED lights, you should definitely not plan for a job as a global CEO. If you want to become a global CEO, your traffic light score should come out like this: predominantly green with perhaps very few amber lights, and definitely no red. If not, the overall result of the assessment-tests may indicate that you have the potential to become a local CEO in a private company or a public organisation.

TEST 2	Am I willing to make 'sacrifices' such as:	GREEN	AMBER	RED
1	Working 80 hours a week	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	Often prioritising work over family life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	Living abroad for several years (with your family), learning new languages and developing knowledge of new cultures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	Taking responsibility and work under high levels of stress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	Handling very difficult personnel issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	Trusting people of different cultures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	Sacrificing pay in your early career if necessary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	Taking on very different positions to learn all aspects of business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	Making decisions that are not popular with people around you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	Not always getting the promotion, pay and titles as quickly as you had hoped for	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Total	How many of each colour did you get?			

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST 3**HAVE YOU GOT THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT LEADER?**

The third test is centred on your characteristics, and once again we remind you that you must be totally honest.

TEST 3	Do I have the key characteristics of a great leader?	GREEN	AMBER	RED
1	Passion for people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	Strong team player	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	Very high level of emotional intelligence (EQ>IQ)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	Very high level of energy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	Balanced personality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	Sound judgement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	Curious and eager to learn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	Integrity and high ethical standards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	Ability to listen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	Seems lucky	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Total	How many of each colour did you get?			

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Nobody is perfect, so we do not expect anyone to get 10 green lights. A few amber lights are acceptable, but red lights are not good.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST 4

DO YOU HAVE THE SKILLS OF A GREAT LEADER?

The fourth self-assessment about your skills that you should carry out is a very deep and honest assessment of yourself on each of the 10 characteristics below:

TEST 4	Do I have the key skills of a great leader?	GREEN	AMBER	RED
1	Takes initiative and shoulders responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	Strategic thinker	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	Excellent communicator with people at all levels	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	Reliable: produces results and makes money for their business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	Interested in all business functions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	Has intimate knowledge of the business and understands what drives it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	Understands the big picture and detail equally well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	Do not complicate things—keeps it simple	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	Removes roadblocks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	Makes sound decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Total	How many of each colour did you get?			

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Nobody is perfect, so we do not expect anyone to get 10 green lights. A few amber lights are acceptable, but red lights are not good.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST 5

DO YOU HAVE THE LEADERSHIP PROFILE OF A GREAT LEADER WITH CEO POTENTIAL?

The fifth assessment we advise you to do is to assess where you think you are on our matrix, and to which point you think that you can move.

If you have not yet had a management job with responsibility, you may find it difficult to score yourself. However, if you try to think about how you have got to where you are in your life now, you will have a sense of whether this has happened by accident or whether it is as a result of your aspirations, skills and characteristics.

TEST 5		Do I have the leadership profile of a great leader?		GREEN	AMBER	RED
DELIVER	HIGH	The Charismatic Leader <small>RED</small>	The Great Leader <small>GREEN</small>	○	○	○
	LOW	The Mediocre Manager <small>NEUTRAL</small>	The Effective Manager <small>AMBER</small>			

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In this test, we do not expect many to deserve a green light, i.e. the upper right quadrant. But if you are somewhere in the centre of the figure you will deserve an amber light. Needless to say, being at the bottom of the left-hand quadrant will give you a red light and the advice not to go for a career dreaming of becoming a successful global CEO.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST 6**WHAT HAVE YOU DONE SO FAR IN YOUR LIFE THAT MAKES YOU LIKELY TO BECOME A GREAT LEADER AND A SUCCESSFUL CEO OF A GLOBAL COMPANY?**

This self-assessment is one where you will have to make a judgement on important things that you have done so far in your life.

We suggest that you write the main points as bullet points and then subject each of them to the traffic light scoring system:

TEST 6	What are my achievements in life?	GREEN	AMBER	RED
1	At school, university, sports clubs, etc., was I a leader or a follower?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	What are my major achievements? Where have I made a difference?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	Have I had any leadership positions at a young age?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	Have I taken any major initiatives?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	Do I always take the traditional route or do I think creatively?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Total	How many of each colour did you get?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Both green and amber lights are a pass. A red light is not good. If you have not shown any initiative and have not achieved a few great things already, it may not be in your destiny to become a great leader and a successful CEO.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST 7

HOW IS MY REPUTATION?

This is also a qualitative test that requires total honesty. You should try to describe how you believe that other people see you as a potential great leader. Please ask your mentor for help to make sure that you get this right.

It is not enough to know what you think about yourself: you must try to find out what your colleagues and bosses think about you. Their opinion will play a key role in the future of your career. We do not suggest that you use traffic lights here; the purpose is simply to provide you with an important outside qualitative view on how you are perceived. This should give you the opportunity to improve where needed.

But how to find out what they really think? You have to ask them! This should be done during your annual assessments with your bosses. You can also ask colleagues to come up with one or two brief points that they think characterise you. Don't forget to ask them to point out weaknesses as well as strengths. You will need three to five honest quotes.

TEST 7	What do my colleagues say about my leadership potential?
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

The result of this final assessment test should give you two things: first, other people’s perceptions of you, which is the only thing that really matters when it comes to career development; and second, the foundation to develop your career and your personal brand.

EVALUATION

SELF-ASSESSMENT TESTS RESULTS

You have now been through seven self-assessment tests. The next stage is to write a short and objective essay about the result of your self-assessment tests using the following headings:

1. Why I want to become a CEO
2. ‘Sacrifices’ I am willing to make to become a CEO
3. Why I believe that I have the *characteristics* of a great leader and the potential to become a CEO
4. Why I believe that I have the *skills* to become a great leader who has the potential to become a CEO
5. My leadership profile
6. My achievements and where I have made a difference
7. What my colleagues say about me
8. Areas where I need to improve
9. Did I pass the test?
10. Decision, action plan, and where do I go from here?

We suggest that you keep your essay in a safe place throughout your career as a precious souvenir of the start of your career.

If you and your mentor(s) are convinced that the results of the seven self-assessment tests indicate that you have what it takes and that you really want to pursue a career that can lead to a CEO job, the next steps will be to start planning your career, creating a personal brand and figuring out how you get on to the CEO career ladder. We will discuss these issues in Part V of *From MBA to CEO*. The self-assessment tests should also give you some guidance as to how big a CEO job you realistically should aim for. We suggest that you are realistic about how far you can go. Focus on getting that first CEO as early as you can—no matter how small it is and where on the planet it is.

If you are just a little doubtful about whether or not a CEO position is right for you, you should consider trying regardless. People with leadership potential typically learn and develop when given the opportunity to show their capabilities. You may have been too modest in your self-assessment. Give it a very serious attempt anyway, starting a career where you have the possibility of getting a small CEO job very early on in your career.

If you have come to the conclusion that a CEO career is definitely not for you, you should start planning a different career and consider creating a personal brand as, ‘the effective manager’—an excellent and reliable Number Two man or woman or as a top-notch specialist for which there are many more great job opportunities than there are for CEOs. There are many options.

If you are a woman and have come to the conclusion that a CEO career is right for you but not at this stage of your life because you give priority to raising a family, you should not despair. If you really want to become a CEO *and* raise a family, experience shows that the CFO path to the top can work. Consider building a brand as a rounded CFO with CEO potential.

We have the following advice and comments about this situation:

- Women are often outstanding CFOs and, as such, move to CEO positions if the opportunity arises
- A career break is not necessarily a big problem—even if your male colleagues race ahead
- CFOs can change to another industry much more easily than CEOs
- Whilst raising a family, many good employers will let you work from home on occasion and will understand that you are not ready for a transfer to a new country
- Make an effort to work abroad very early on in your career
- Female CFOs have much higher chances of becoming CEOs than colleagues who have chosen careers in HR, Legal, IT, etc.
- Female CFOs are increasingly in demand for non-executive directorships.

Whatever the outcome of your self-assessment test, you should now move on to Part IV, which covers all key aspects of career planning. This chapter is tailored to people who want to pursue a career towards a CEO role; however, most of the advice will also help people to plan alternative careers.
