

THE SELF-DISRUPTIVE LEADER

As much as it may seem logical to think so, it doesn't always follow that great companies have great leaders. High performance often hides a multitude of sins—toxic cultures, questionable practices, employee disengagement, etc.



That reality is starkly revealed in Korn Ferry's latest examination of the skills future leaders need, as detailed in this executive summary. The findings of our report, **The Self-Disruptive Leader**, were based on analyzing the profiles of more than 150,000 leaders, as well as opinion research from 795 investors who fund outwardly "winning" organizations. Not only were investors of companies dissatisfied with what they saw (70% argued short-term pressures stripped leaders of the ability to push through innovation, digitization, and change), but they considered current leadership styles to be in urgent need of change. A surprising two-thirds (67%) identified current leadership norms as "not fit for the future."

GLOBAL DISRUPTION CALLS FOR THE "SELF-DISRUPTIVE" LEADER.

With the only certainty seemingly being that business will only face greater uncertainty, our findings suggest a new and very different leader is required.

Our research found that if companies are to avoid self-destructing, leaders need to embrace (rather than simply react to) the external disruptions they face. To beat disruption, they literally need to "disrupt" themselves—their thoughts, their values, their actions. The disruption of markets can only be met with the disruption of the leadership approach.

In short, the **self-disruptive leader** is what companies now need.

IN SHORT, IT IS THE 'SELF-DISRUPTIVE LEADER' COMPANIES NOW NEED.

NEW BUSINESS LANDSCAPE; NEW QUALITIES NEEDED.

The majority of current leaders are simply not demonstrating the necessary learning agility, social and emotional intelligence, and ability to be both assured but also humble that being a self-disruptive leader requires.

Specifically, our research finds that the self-disruptive leader needs to have five key qualities: they need to **ADAPT**—that is, have the ability to **anticipate, drive, accelerate, partner, and trust**.

But while these skills might be regarded as essential (and obvious) attributes common to all leaders, our research also reveals that, only 15% of today's leaders actually have all five of these qualities.

ADAPT ENSURES PERSONAL AND CORPORATE IMPACT.

What makes leaders who ADAPT so valuable, our findings revealed, is the transferability of these particular skills.

Not only do self-disruptive leaders render positive personal impact, but they also have business transformation impact.

In the process of disrupting themselves, these leaders guarantee they will bring the rest of the organization with them. These are leaders who:

- Don't dictate but "drive";
- Listen to others to assess where they can have "first mover" advantage;
- Are fueled by purpose and would rather create networks and partnerships rather than ivory towers.

Self-disruptive leaders embrace and recognize potential, rather than look down from above and think they know best.

ADAPT LEADERS GENERATE THE GREATEST CHANGE.

Korn Ferry finds those leaders that excel strongly in all five ADAPT qualities stand to make the biggest progress in their organizations.

Of course, in the real world, leaders' actual balance of these strengths isn't equal, and there is even evidence some strengths are naturally stronger in different countries

than others. In France for example, leaders tend to score more highly on their ability to trust, but less so in their ability to drive and partner. Those in Japan tend to score more highly on their ability to accelerate but less so in their ability to build trust. The full details of these differences (in 18 different markets, including the US, UK, Indonesia, Germany, The Netherlands, Australia, South Africa, Malaysia, India, Hong Kong and Singapore), are covered in greater depth in our report.

But regardless of the country these leaders operate in, one unifying quality is certain: self-disruptive leaders are universally different, in the way they both think and behave. And far from this being a marker of difference that leaves stakeholders unsure, we believe these qualities should be intentionally pursued.

LOOK OUT FOR DISRUPTIVE LEADERS AND THINGS WILL LOOK UP.

Our analysis finds organizations that actively seek and support self-disruptive leaders understand that the disruption they're trying to solve needn't be the fearful journey it could be.

This is because these organizations are making a powerful internal and external statement that they are ready to evolve. They see skills and talent development as part of a "system" in their organization; they also see the value of devolving leadership development to more and more people (and in particular, people managers). Our research found 63% of investors and analysts believe high-flyers with the right skills and capacities in middle management will be vital in the future of work.

A LONG WAY OFF YET.

But what our research also shows, however, is that organizations are still a long way off from being able to call out, accept, and develop these new leaders of the future. Once organizations begin to do so, they will be able to create future-fit businesses.

If disruption is inevitable in business, so too should disruptive leadership.