

# **CEO Bipolarity**

## **A Special Report by Larry A. Bauman**

The world today moves in opposite directions more often than we want to admit. The case in point can be viewed by examining CEO's at all size businesses. Currently under siege in the world, CEO's have taken steps to draw lines in the sand for shareholders, employees, and themselves. The complicating fact that some of these lines can be seen and others can't draws a huge distinction between the ethical responsibilities of the CEO. Personalities play an important part. It is hard to find upper level management that has a meek or mild personality. If you do, you can be assured that the sharks will have a feeding frenzy quickly and the job position will be eliminated through reorganization or the individual will be replaced in favor of a more aggressive, savvy, person.

Why has this phenomena become more prevalent today? Certainly the situation with suspected accounting fraud and the falsifying of financial statements has provided a new focus on the way corporate heads run their businesses. In addition, the economy has made upper management incredibly cautious about providing a distinct roadmap to drive business. They are holding back on critical decisions in favor of cost cutting measures. Fewer people in the organizations are doing more work. Laid off workers are out looking for new jobs.

There are a few CEO's that are stepping up to the challenges that are being thrust at them in today's marketplace. They provide a shining light for those that have decided to step over the unseen lines in the sand to the quagmire of questionable behavior and confused responsibility. Investors, shareholders, employees and customers recognize when true challenges are being dealt with

properly. They also realize when these challenges are not dealt with in a proper manner. Their messages are not in sync with real concerns that are facing their company. CEO's have become bipolar, appearing one way yet acting in another way. Diametrical points of view mark their character.

What should we expect from our top executives? Our individual expectations are relative to our own situations. However, a few common characteristics might provide a reversal to the bipolarization being experienced today.

### **Setting the Example**

I was once told that to being a good manager is like being a good parent, you set the example everyday. CEO's are looked up too inherently by the position they hold. They set the example in all areas, from demeanor and behavior to commitment and vision. Employees, associates, team members, or whatever you choose to call them as the term du jour, the CEO can expect them be to far more influenced by what they see you do than by what they hear you say. The example that is set has a direct reflection on the culture you are creating within your organization.

### **Leadership Begins Within**

How do you measure personal integrity? A blending of knowledge, critical judgement, disposition, and vision creates the makeup of most top level executives. Integrity, itself, sets the CEO apart. It is the most critical attribute, together with fortitude, that provides the CEO with leadership credentials to make the proper decisions. Being passionate about the job forms the foundation for any position. It is the blending of personal character with personal integrity that makes people acknowledge leadership and willingly want to follow.

## **Eliminating the Element of Surprise**

The “I didn’t know” ploy has been used a great deal of late. Being in a position of leadership demands that the element of surprise be eliminated. This applies to financial reports as well as meeting agendas. The report structure within your company should detail the opportunities that others may see as unexpected. The input becomes invaluable. The outcome will be powerful. A surprise is defined as “an attack without warning”. The warning signals are all around. By deciphering the signals, the plan of attack is no surprise. It is the outcome of planning continuity, surgical tactics, and a prescribed vision to omit the element of surprise.

## **Consistent Style**

CEO’s that provide consistency will also provide a behavioral model for those working with them. Style is acquired over years of managing people and situations. Experience helps provide consistency. Drawing on the past to provide a clear path for the future is the essence of wisdom. The approach can vary, however the style with which the approach is adapted has to remain consistent. Decisiveness is a personality trait that connotes the style you chose to use. Confidence is another. Your traits make up your style of managing and your style will be mimicked within your organization. Your organization’s culture derives most of its traits from you. When your style changes daily, the organization will become inconsistent in its approach. Consistent style is more important than every before.

## **Compelling Purpose**

Analyze your core values. They will be your guiding lights as to your purpose. Identifying the single most important reason why we are who we are provides us with a purpose for being. Both individuals and organizations need to know the single most important reason for their existence. By

identifying and knowing our purpose we know what the mission truly is to be accomplished.

### **Capacity to Persuade**

With the position comes the power to persuade, knowingly or otherwise. Actions can speak louder than words. For this reason, the capacity to persuade with or without words provides the CEO with opportunities to transfer his views on a particular issue to those that are part of his organization. The CEO is viewed by others as the final answer. If he is comfortable with the way a situation is being handled, then it must be correct and right. The persuasion factor is critical because the position connotes strength based on political, moral and ethical correctness.

### **Understanding Others Feelings**

The higher up the ladder of success, the less other people's feelings can mean if you are not cognizant of them. It has been warned by many to "remember those you step on going to the top because you will surely see them again on the way down". The truly great leaders constantly focus on the feelings of others. Creating an environment where the feelings of others are considered within the framework of decision making fosters one of the best qualities for those possessing top positions. Consideration applies at all levels in an organization. Using personal understanding and empathy as a tool will speak volumes to the masses.

### **Working Within the System Yet Thinking Out of the Box**

Assuming the system is a good one, the CEO should be intimately familiar with the loopholes that may exist. Constraints can be placed where necessary to make sure the rules are not bent by those that are direct reports. Changing a flawed system to shift a balance of power financially or politically to offset competing interests calls for special skills and attention. By

fostering an environment that promotes free thinking as well as a respect for associates working within the system yields huge benefits for the organization.

Providing a balanced direction and approach keeps the CEO as well as the organization from veering off course at a critical juncture.

### **Strong, Prudent Advisors**

The best CEO's surround themselves with the best people. There is little time to worry about others jockeying for position to move up the ladder within the company. Managed correctly, the lieutenants can make the decisions that enhance the overall success of the company. They also advise the CEO on situations that help keep consensus within the top management structure. They provide a list of alternatives and potential direction shifts with possible outcomes. They are helpful in limiting potential course deviations the company can make when being managed top down from the top position.

By selecting strong advisors for the team, the CEO can set a course that will be dynamic in virtue, strong in planning, and passionate about success.

### **Inspiring Others to Carry on the Mission**

When others feel inspiration from the top, it becomes synonymous with the culture of the company. There is no north or south with inspiration; it demands singular purpose and unfaltering commitment. The CEO should be a living example, inspiring others to take up the flag of purpose and be unyielding in their commitment to exceed others expectations within the company. The mission remains alive and well whether the CEO is physically present or not.

## **Continuous Improvement**

Stagnation is not an option. The CEO, the company, and the individuals comprising the company have to continue to get better from several perspectives. They must continue to move the company via a sound financial footing, they must provide quality products or services for the clients, and they must continue to improve their own abilities to function at peak performance for the organization. Being second best is no longer an option that can be afforded in a highly competitive world marketplace unless this is the position you have chosen to hold.

Strength comes from internal and external forces. Competing forces can be harnessed to work congruently with personal standards takes talent, understanding and exceptional intelligence. The CEO faces a myriad of opportunities to choose paths that can produce poor results from poor choices. The CEO also faces a set of standards that few are expected to live up to. Will you choose the high road, the road less traveled, or the wrong road? Will you appear bipolar in your approach by speaking one way and acting another? Ultimately, the choice belongs to the individual.

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