

# THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE **research**

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THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE ON BECOMING A BETTER LEADER

**TITLE** Leadership Development and the Characteristics/Traits of Ethical and Effective Leaders: The Delphi Technique

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**OBJECTIVE** The purpose of the study was to explore the influence of leader characteristics/traits, including ethics, on leadership development.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A Delphi panel (N=36) was selected and asked to identify characteristics/traits they believed to be important in predicting and developing ethical and effective leaders. Panel members were selected from 14 counties within central Georgia and represented members from public, private and not-for-profit organizations with leadership experience. Each member completed the Leadership Practices Inventory. Characteristics were identified in the first round, ranked in the second round and the final round asked whether these traits could be modified through training efforts.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

The following categories captured the characteristics important in predicting effective managerial leadership by the Delphi panel: Visionary (17%), Team-Building Skills (14%), Competence (11%), Charisma (11%), Honesty (10%), Growth Oriented (9%), Goal Driven (8%) and Fairness (8%). Identified as important for predicting an individual's capability of becoming an ethical leader were Honesty (48%), Team-Building Skills (19%), Religion (19%) and Fairness (15%). The panel identified the most important category predictive of both effective and ethical leadership as Goal Driven, followed by Honesty, Team Building Skills, Competence, Visionary, and Charisma. The characteristics most susceptible to modification via training were believed to be (from most to least): Competence, Team Building Skills, Growth Oriented, Responsible, Goal Driven, Fairness, Visionary, Charisma, Religious, and Honesty.

"The findings of this study suggest that both ethical and effective leadership is important to organizations and hence should not be viewed as a 'zero-sum game,' but rather, as a complimentary process. In fact, the results suggest that both concepts are intricately linked by common characteristics/traits such as honesty, a religious mind-set, team-building skills, and a sense of fairness" (p. 85).