

WANT TO GET PROMOTED?

JACK WELCH DESCRIBES THE MOST IMPORTANT TRAIT YOU NEED

I have never seen a great leader that didn't have the generosity gene. Take care of your people, let them know where they stand, cheer them, never take credit for what they do, and they'll go to the moon for you.

By **JEFF HADEN**
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THERE are many things you can say about Jack Welch, and this is one of them: he definitely knows how to identify and develop great leaders.

That was true when he was the chief executive officer (CEO) of General Electric (GE), and it remains true today. (For example, the Jack Welch Management Institute, JWMI, online MBA programme has been named the most influential education brand on LinkedIn and was named a 2016 business school to watch by Poets and Quants.)

Since the JWMI recently held its commencement service in Washington, DC, for approximately 200 graduates, it seemed like the perfect time to talk to Welch about education and leadership and the most important quality people hoping to be promoted need to possess.

With all the different avenues for learning, is an MBA still relevant?

In the right school, you'll learn how to motivate, how to manage, how to fire – you won't do a lot of theory. If you want to teach, theory is fine. In the real world, skills are everything.

In our school, we have working adults. To be accepted, they have to have a job. Our premise is they learn on Monday, practise on Tuesday, and put what they learn to work right away.

Say I'm already an entrepreneur. How could an MBA be useful to me?

You see so many start-ups where the founder doesn't carry the company all the way through its growth. In fact,

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that's one of the most common phenomena; someone doesn't enjoy managing or simply can't manage.

Of course, if I'm starting a venture, I'm not going to take two years off to get an MBA. I'll go to work every day and get my MBA. That's where we come in. We take people who have a handle on their career or their aspirations, people who know where they want to go.

Our last graduation was the most beautiful thing in the world to see. There were all these working adults from all over the United States, and the world lined up for the procession. It was breathtaking. It was one of the greatest moments of my life.

The mission of the school is to change the trajectory of your life, and that holds true whether you run your own business or work for someone else. We teach people how to get out of the trenches by building great teams.

You talk about teams a lot.

Success is based on people first and strategy second. Build a great team and you will accomplish things beyond your wildest dreams. You grow from the reflected glory of your people.

When your team delivers, you enjoy the fruit.

What do you know now that you wish you had known when you were, say, 20 years old?

I wish I had a better definition of what I now call the "generosity gene." For a long time, I never quite identified that ingredient.

If a leader didn't desperately want to give raises, to promote people, if he or she didn't get as much satisfaction from other people's success as he did from his own... I didn't see that as well as I should have.

I have never seen a great leader that didn't have the generosity gene. Take care of your people, let them know where they stand, cheer them, never take credit for what they do, and they'll go to the moon for you.

I wish I'd identified the generosity gene as a clear requirement for the people I chose to take on leadership positions. I never would have made as many mistakes picking people as I did.

Once you're in charge of people, it's no longer about you – it's about your team. Any leader who still thinks it's about him is destined to fail.

■ *Jeff Haden is an author of more than 50 non-fiction books and ghostwriter for innovators and business leaders. To engage with him, e-mail us at editor@leaderonomics.com.*

