

The G Quotient

**Why Gay Executives
Are Excelling as Leaders . . .
and What Every Manager
Needs to Know**

Kirk Snyder

 **JOSSEY-BASS**
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Published by Jossey-Bass

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989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741 www.josseybass.com

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Snyder, Kirk.

The G quotient : why gay executives are excelling as leaders—and what every manager needs to know / Kirk Snyder.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7879-8246-1 (cloth)

ISBN-10: 0-7879-8246-6 (cloth)

1. Leadership. 2. Executives. 3. Gay men. I. Title.

HD57.7.S688 2006

658.4'092—dc22

2006009302

Printed in the United States of America

FIRST EDITION

HB Printing 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Preface

Many years ago, while I was studying the art of entrepreneurship as an undergraduate at the University of Southern California, the late Marcia Israel—one of the most successful self-made women in the history of the retail field—told my class that good entrepreneurs see *connection* where others see disconnection. Whether or not I’m a good entrepreneur is a chapter in my life that’s still being written. However, what I will take credit for at this point is connecting several observable realities in the newly recalibrated world of work and following what has been an uncharted path in the study of business leadership.

Over a period of five years, my research for *The G Quotient* spanned more than three thousand working professionals, representing an expansive cross-section of diverse organizations from California to North Carolina to The Netherlands. (For more detail about this research, please see Appendix B.)

Initially, my main goal for this project was to identify specific leadership behaviors that the next generation of managers would need to embrace in order to achieve and sustain career success over the next decade. Along the way, I recognized one of those entrepreneurial connections, and the project took an unexpected turn in a very different direction. As a result of my detour, I created a new phase of research and subsequently surveyed more than a thousand employees (across four major U.S. business sectors: Fortune 500 companies, colleges and universities, government, and small business) working under the leadership of gay male executives, referred to throughout this book simply as “gay executives.” Consisting of primarily straight employees, this new research established a positive

correlation between the leadership behaviors evidenced in organizations managed by these gay executives and the significantly higher-than-average rates of job engagement, satisfaction, and workplace morale reported by their employees. Ultimately, this new phase of research provided the title for this book by putting the “G” in *The G Quotient*, resulting in what some cautioned was a leadership book too controversial to be published.

Making the Connection

From 2003 through 2004, I studied (empirically as well as through field research) what I will refer to throughout this book as the *reconstruction of contemporary employees*. Without getting too far ahead of myself, the practical implication of this new term is essentially a recalibration of employee beliefs, values, and expectations. It’s also a primary contributor to the leadership success of gay executives—and therefore an important part of *The G Quotient*. A natural by-product of what is often referred to as the Digital Age, the world itself gave today’s employees their key tool for reinvention—instant access to specialized, work-related *knowledge*.

Along with the reconstruction of contemporary employees, the meaning of successful leadership has been simultaneously and unavoidably recalibrated as well. The end result is a message that resonates across a diverse spectrum of business playing fields from the Fortune 500 to entrepreneurial enterprises in virtually all fields and industries. Today’s workforce is the most knowledgeable, diverse, and empowered in recorded history, and old leadership paradigms no longer apply. Why? Because the business world they originally served no longer exists.

Defining the G Quotient

While corporate America is seemingly baffled by the steady decline in cross-the-board levels of employee engagement, job satisfaction, and workplace morale, employees under the leadership of gay exec-

The following chart details the percentages of employees who report higher levels of job engagement, job satisfaction, and workplace morale under the leadership of gay male managers, compared with nationally reported statistics. (For more detail on the G Quotient results, see Appendix D.)

	G Quotient	Nationally
Engagement	85.30	21 ¹
Job satisfaction	81.39	45 ²
Workplace morale	84.82	40 ³

utives in the four major business sectors I studied are the collective exception. In all four sectors, employees in these environments report significantly higher levels of job engagement, job satisfaction, and workplace morale than comparative national averages.

My research found that in organizations and working units under the direct leadership of non-closeted gay executives, an environment is created where employees care about their work, demonstrate a deep commitment to professional excellence, and feel individually connected to advancing the success of the organization itself. Because these executives approach their leadership role with a worldview that places primary value on the individual, they believe each employee has the right to a place of foremost importance within the organization. This belief fosters a workplace climate based on a foundation of inclusion, which in turn breeds a type of employee engagement rarely seen in other professional environments.

What makes G Quotient leadership different? When leadership is based on absolute inclusion, meaning that all employees are viewed by their managers as having the value and authority to play a key role in the success of the organization because of who they are as human beings, it cements a positive, equality-based connection between employees and their managers. Without this type of authentic personal connection, today's employees will typically disengage from their work because they feel their employers view them

simply as laborers rather than as fully participating and meaningful *contributors* to the organization.

Getting Over the “G” Word

Do you have to be a gay male to be a G Quotient leader?

Absolutely not.

G Quotient leaders come in all mixes of gender and sexual orientation. (See Appendix C for the range of G Quotient scores among various demographic groups.)

However, because this is the first business leadership book of its kind—based on the first large-scale research of its kind—I believe it’s necessary to further address the “G” word and the role sexual orientation does or does not play in G Quotient leadership.

The G Quotient is not a gay management style. However, for a variety of reasons explored in detail in the Introduction, gay executives are in the right place at the right time to achieve beyond the status quo as business leaders. Several phenomena combine to explain the development of G Quotient leadership among this particular group of professionals: employee needs, learned social skills, and the convergence of documented sociocultural factors and trends. As identified in my research, it’s a group that, as a collective whole, face no additional types of oppression other than their sexual orientation. Primarily white, middle-class, and college-educated, these gay executives bridge the traditional world of business, historically run by straight white males, and the new business world where diversity, creativity, and empathy are viewed as professional commodities.

In Part One of this book, you will meet the namesakes of G Quotient leadership, and later, many of their employees. It’s important to note that for the purposes of my research, the gay executives identified throughout this book all carry out their leadership roles in friendly and affirming environments and are non-closeted in their professional lives. Listed at the end of this Preface, the organizations they serve range from global household names to government agencies and successful entrepreneurial business enterprises.

In Part Two, I delve more deeply into the reasons why G Quotient leadership is here to stay, and what all managers (whether straight or gay) need to know about how integrating the G Quotient into their approach to leadership can benefit their career, organization, and employees. At the conclusion of the book, Appendix A offers you an opportunity to take a quick assessment to see how your own beliefs and behaviors about management align with the seven principles of G Quotient leadership.

Because the G Quotient is indeed breaking new ground in the study of business leadership, I would be remiss not to comment on the existence of certain societal obstacles that will no doubt prevent some people from finding the freedom to learn from gay executives. Primarily born out of conservative politics or religious ideology, these obstacles represent beliefs and behaviors that no longer have relevance in the new world of work. As a university educator who has moderated many charged classroom discussions, I guarantee that strong emotions can also make for great dialogue. When accompanied by open minds, such dialogue can serve to enlighten all parties involved.

The following companies and organizations, in whole or within specific working units, have managers identified as G Quotient leaders who participated in my research and are featured throughout the book.

A.T. Kearney
 Bain & Company
 Barclay's Bank
 Citicorp
 Deloitte Consulting LLP
 Disney
 Ernst & Young
 General Electric
 Hampshire College
 IBM

State of Massachusetts
 Mitchell Gold +
 Bob Williams
 Morgan Stanley
 PepsiCo
 Quest Diagnostics
 Replacements, Inc.
 University of California
 University of Southern
 California

To my parents, Edwin and Lula Snyder

Introduction

What Is the G Quotient?

Recently, a colleague I've known and respected for many years called to find out more about "this G Quotient leadership thing" he heard buzzing about the university. I imagine he was expecting some lengthy scholarly discourse, but in the interest of nondisclosure and a terrier that desperately needed walking, I simply said, "It's all about Baskin-Robbins and peanut butter and chocolate ice cream!"

Now if you've ever had this wonderful concoction, I'm sure you'll agree that it's those delicious chunks of peanut butter that compels even the most steadfast dieter to order a triple scoop. As a business case, it's a great lesson in adaptability. Based on highly classified inside information (a high school buddy of mine worked at Baskin Robbins), I was told that the original plan actually called for smooth swirls of peanut butter. However, when the product developers opened the very first batch, they discovered something completely unanticipated (those delicious chunks of peanut butter) and decided to run with it. It was much like my own research process, which led me to the identification of what my normally more eloquent colleague termed, "this G Quotient leadership thing."

My particular field of expertise, which is essentially examining the role of work in contemporary society, offers two general research paths to follow—one of correlation and one of experimentation. While experimentation can lead to great discoveries, I'm not particularly fond of repetition, nor am I patient enough to ever become a true pioneer. As I mentioned in the Preface, my particular aptitude is connecting the dots, and that is exactly how the G Quotient came to life.

The goal of correlational research is to identify a relationship between variables. In the case of this book, it's the correlation between the leadership behaviors of gay male executives and the significantly higher-than-average levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and workplace morale among their employees. From 2000 through 2003, while conducting one of the largest-ever research projects chronicling the career experiences of professional gays and lesbians (which eventually led to my first book, *Lavender Road to Success*), I kept hearing anecdotes that suggested a high level of satisfaction among their employees. Since my focus was on the career experiences of these professionals and not on their employees, I simply noted it as an interesting aside.

During this same period it was clear that the state of the workplace was facing a very real and troubling problem. Among peers in my own field, it was a topic that was heating up all over the country. Word from the front lines of most major business sectors—reflected on the assorted e-mail discussion lists I subscribed to—indicated that indeed employees were growing extremely unhappy with their workplace leadership. One day in particular I recall receiving at least a dozen e-mail messages, some linking me to new articles on the subject and others that were more personal. Friends, colleagues, and readers were also talking to me about how disengaged they were at work. Why? The answers were invariably the same. “My boss doesn’t value me” or “I’m tired of feeling like I don’t have a voice at work.” We’ve all had our share of bad bosses who manage out of anger or insecurity, but it appeared that this widespread employee unrest was reaching what seemed like epidemic proportions. The needs and expectations of contemporary employees had clearly changed, but the leadership style of most managers did not address or recognize these changes, much less allow for an understanding of the transformation itself.

When I finished my first book, a new research project was waiting in the wings, one that on the surface seemed to be a completely separate endeavor. At the time, I had no idea that I was about to

find my own version of peanut-butter-and-chocolate ice cream. My research observations indicated that we had indeed entered a new time in the world of work. The overall expectations and values of today's employees had been completely redefined since the mid-1990s. One phase of my research consisted of surveying recruiters and hiring managers primarily from the Fortune 500. A subsequent phase was developed to determine whether or not there was a difference in levels of employee engagement within different sectors. Because technology makes it possible to segment data and run all types of reports to identify various connections, I started to see a difference not based on sector but on personal demographics. One group I had sent this particular survey to was a small group of gay managers who represented various industries around the country. When I contrasted their assessment of the engagement levels among their employees with those of the greater research group, I was surprised to find a very different set of correlations.

It was at this point that those anecdotal reports of happy employees that I had tucked away in my memory bank from my earlier research grew louder. Standing at the proverbial fork in the road, I decided to go down this new path in pursuit of what turned out to be the G Quotient—the result of which you now hold in your hands.

Why Gay Executives Are in the Right Place at the Right Time

Across the centuries, gay men have been documented as leaders in fields that include the arts, philosophy, science, the military, even government and politics. But not until now have they had widespread success as visible business leaders. To understand why gay executives are currently finding great success as business leaders begins with recognizing how gay men have adapted to their surroundings throughout history. For example, psychological literature informs us that even at very early ages, gay men recognize that they

are *different*. As a result, they adapt to the realities of their environments in order to feel emotionally and physically safe. Essentially, it's a matter of survival. But there's a big jump from surviving to thriving.

The G Quotient couldn't have existed in any other time period because of the realities of the emotional closet in which gay men needed to hide in order to feel safe. However, over the past fifty years sociocultural events and circumstances have liberated gay men from marginalized status into acceptable mainstream roles within American society. Today, because it's possible to find success out of the closet in virtually all career fields—although certainly not in all geographic locations—gay men are now using their personal identities as professional assets.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, in 2005, 83 percent of companies in the Fortune 500 included sexual orientation as part of their nondiscrimination policies. In fact, the higher a company is toward the top of the list, the more likely it is to have these policies. Forty-nine—or 98 percent—of the Fortune 50 companies now provide inclusive environments for their gay and lesbian employees.¹ What prompted these companies to include gays and lesbians in their nondiscrimination policies as well as actively seeking to recruit them as employees? Quite simply, it's proving to be good business.

It might be a great premise for a television program on any number of cable networks, but gay executives did not get together one weekend on Fire Island or in West Hollywood and decide to collectively adopt a new approach to organizational leadership. Instead, the predilection for gay men to base their leadership roles on what I have identified in the book as the seven principles of G Quotient leadership evolved over time; it is based on three fundamental (learned) skills that gay men have developed: *adaptability*, *intuitive communication*, and *creative problem solving*. To a researcher, one of the reasons why the G Quotient is so intriguing is that it demonstrates the power of human beings to adapt and

flourish even against what might seem like insurmountable obstacles. Therefore, I believe it's critical to the subject of business leadership to recognize that, independent of one another, gay executives in all types of fields and industries are managing their employees based on these same principles. The G Quotient wasn't planned—it simply evolved.

Why Now?

No one single event has contributed more or less to the development of G Quotient leadership. Rather, multitudes of contributing phenomena occurring over the past fifty-plus years have resulted in the current leadership success of gay executives. Gay executives are quite simply in the right place at the right time, defined by the simultaneous convergence of the following forces:

- The reconstruction of contemporary employees
- The development and refining of the fundamental learned skills of gay men, primarily but not limited to adaptability, intuitive communication, and creative problem solving
- The social, historical, and political context of our time

Within these overlapping contexts, today's business world has unexpectedly become a setting where gay executives are achieving greater success than other demographic populations as effective corporate leaders and entrepreneurs, as measured by their employees. Because gay executives understand what it's like to have their own value as human beings questioned, they are particularly attuned to the needs of today's empowered employees for respect and value. Essentially, gay executives are the first group of leaders in which G Quotient leadership has been identified due in large part to their belief that every employee has tremendous importance as an individual. To fully understand the evolution of the G Quotient and why it's proving so successful as a leadership paradigm in today's

workplace, it's necessary to look in detail at the three converging forces that explain why this is happening now.

The Reconstruction of Contemporary Employees

The seemingly infinite production and dissemination of specialized knowledge on a daily basis has transformed the way employees view their organizational leaders. Knowledge once reserved solely for top-level executives is now readily available to the masses with a simple click. As the primary tool behind employee reconstruction, *knowledge* has completely changed the rules for facilitating employee engagement.

Want to find out what people are really saying about your organization's product line?

Click.

Interested in the salaries and benefits being offered to employees at competing companies?

Click.

Maybe you'd like to read more about that pending lawsuit recently filed against the CEO?

Another click.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, employees in all fields and industries gained widespread access to specialized knowledge that allowed them to peek behind the corporate veil. Simply put, the CEO has no clothes. No matter where you fall on the company's food chain, you can easily view the organization and even its highest leaders in their own professional nakedness. Of course, corporate counter-spin is out there too—primarily from those leaders who are under fire themselves for nefarious behavior. But in the newly recalibrated world of work, leaders no longer have the luxury of hiding their own reality.

Evidence of the struggle among this nation's top executives in their quest to be viewed as successful leaders is evident in the dramatic turnover among the ranks of CEOs. In the first quarter of

2005, Challenger, Gray & Christmas reported that 441 CEOs left their jobs in the United States—an increase of 88 percent over the preceding year.² Corporate America is experiencing widespread boardroom emergencies not because all chief executives have suddenly become incompetent but because most leaders don't understand what their employees need.

In addition to the acquisition of specialized work-related knowledge, another important factor contributes to the process of employee reconstruction. With as many personal networks as there are employees, the opportunity to immediately share all this once-unattainable knowledge has exploded beyond measurement. When you put these two factors together in the context of the workplace, the resulting sum is unparalleled *employee empowerment*.

Knowledge + Interconnection = Employee Empowerment

In addition to being empowered through this equation, our society is undeniably shifting toward empowerment in general. In fact, the demand for self-improvement products and services is forecast to continue its upward climb during the next decade. Therefore, it's arguable that the impact on the individual need for finding personal value will climb as well. In a February 2004 report titled "Self-Improvement Products and Services," Marketdata reported that between 2000 and 2004, the market for self-improvement products and services increased by a whopping 50 percent. By 2008, Marketdata forecasts that the self-help and self-improvement industry will reach \$12 billion, up from \$5.7 billion in 2000.

According to Simba Information, widely recognized as a leading authority for market intelligence and forecasts in the media industry, sales from self-help and self-improvement books alone jumped from \$611 million in 2000 to \$640 million in 2003.³ Represented by the desire to improve mentally, physically, and financially, the quest for self-improvement is a need that can be said to apply to all types of people representing the gamut of demographic circumstances.

From books to television to cable news, these messages place primary importance on the individual, and therefore make an immeasurable impact on the way employees view their own professional roles. It has arguably contributed to the change in how people view themselves in their role as employees. The need among empowered employees to be valued is proving a successful match with G Quotient leadership—as shown in Appendix D, more than 86 percent of employees reporting to gay managers believe their ideas and opinions *matter*. It's a state of being that has made a significant and positive impact on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and workplace morale in G Quotient environments.

The Learned Skills of Gay Men

The origins of today's high level of visibility and acceptance of gays and lesbians can be traced back to the visionary ideals of social pioneers such as Harry Hay, founder of the Mattachine Society. Secretly meeting in private homes in Los Angeles and other cities across the nation, the members of Mattachine were the forbears of the gay liberation movement, opening the closet doors for the development of the G Quotient. More than fifty years ago, Hay felt that as a community, gay men were unique and had something important to offer humanity in general. Hay spoke of gay men as "spirit people" who, across the centuries, served the greater good through roles that included "messengers and interceders, image-makers and prophets, mimes and rhapsodes, poets and playwrights, healers and nurturers, teachers and preachers, searchers and researchers."⁴ Collectively, they represent the historical beginnings of the three fundamental learned skills (adaptability, intuitive communication, and creative problem solving) demonstrated by today's gay executives.

Adaptability. Richard Isay, the first non-closeted gay affirmative psychiatrist of the American Psychoanalytic Association and author of the noteworthy books *Being Homosexual: Gay Men and*