

Best Minds on Leadership

Who are the top 100 thought leaders?



by Ken Shelton

I RECENTLY LISTENED TO A SPEECH by a friend and leadership mentor, *Dallin H. Oaks*, now a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He spoke of the conundrum of having more things expected of us than we can possibly do.

He suggested that "just because something is *good* is not sufficient reason for doing it. The number of things we can do far exceeds the time available to accomplish them. As we consider various choices, we should remember that it is not enough that something is *good*. Some things are *better* than good, and still others are *best*, and these are the things that should command priority attention. Even though a particular option may cost more, its far greater value may make it the *best* choice. Limited time and resources don't allow us to do every *good* thing. We need to evaluate its potential for *good*, *better*, and *best* and put our priority time and best efforts into those things that will produce the more desired end results."

As I rank the *best* minds on leadership, I reflect on this notion, although I recognize that *best* may be in the eye (or ear) of the beholder.

Eight Criteria

What does it take today to be considered a top *thought leader* in the field of leadership? Well, I can say this: much more than it did 24 years ago when we launched

Leadership Excellence. As Tom Peters recently bemoaned, "It's tough being a guru today."

Indeed, the standards and expectations keep rising, as do the number of practitioners. The old qualifications—a pulse and Ph.D., a business card and book, an ego and outgoing nature, a sales pitch and speech, a solution looking for a problem, and a need (greed) to be rich and recognized—have mostly given way to a new set of qualifiers.

The gurus who make our *Excellence 100* list today possess a rare combination of traits and abilities. Here are the *eight criteria*:

1. **Preparation:** academic and professional preparation.

2. **Character:** values, ethics, beliefs, purpose, mission, integrity, walk the talk.

3. **Principles:** big message, point of view, tenets, main points.

4. **Personality:** charisma, style, originality, authenticity, one of a kind.

5. **Performance:** inspiring action, real-world performance, work ethic.

6. **Experience:** beyond local and regional, more national and international.

7. **Expression:** substance and style in writing, speaking, coaching, consulting, mentoring, training, or teaching.

8. **Influence:** difference, results, change, transformation.

The Top 100 Thought Leaders

For 24 years, we've published the best minds on leadership around a *Seven Dimension Model*. Here's our 2007 listing of the Top 100 thought leaders on leadership:

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LEADERSHIP



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|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Gary Hamel | 14. Jack Zenger | 36. Michael Treacy | 58. Charles Garfield | 80. Tom Crum |
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