

Lee Iacocca (b. 1924) is best known for his years as an auto executive in Detroit, being appointed President of the Ford Division of General Motors on his 40th birthday. During his time at Ford, Iacocca was involved in the design of several successful Ford automobiles, the most noteworthy being the Ford Mustang. Later Iacocca became Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Chrysler Corporation, rescuing that company from near bankruptcy. Since leaving Chrysler in 1993, Iacocca has become a philanthropist and author. His latest book, titled Where Have all the Leaders Gone?, was published May 17, 2007, and is the source for the passage below.

THE TEST OF A LEADER

by Lee Iacocca

I've never been Commander in Chief, but I've been a CEO. I understand a few things about leadership at the top. I've figured out nine points--not ten (I don't want people accusing me of thinking I'm Moses). I call them the "Nine C's of Leadership." They're not fancy or complicated. Just clear, obvious qualities that every true leader should have.

So, here's my C list:

A leader has to show CURIOSITY. He has to listen to people outside of the "Yes, sir" crowd in his inner circle. He has to read voraciously, because the world is a big, complicated place. Thomas Jefferson once said, "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate for a moment to prefer the latter."

If a leader never steps outside his comfort zone to hear different ideas, he grows stale. If he doesn't put his beliefs to the test, how does he know he's right? The inability to listen is a form of arrogance. It means either you think you already know it all, or you just don't care.

A leader has to be CREATIVE, go out on a limb, be willing to try something different. You know, *think outside the box*. Leadership is all about managing change--whether you're leading a company or leading a country. Things change, and you get creative.

A leader has to COMMUNICATE. I'm not talking about running off at the mouth or spouting sound bites. I'm talking about facing reality and telling the truth. Communication has to start with telling the truth, even when it's painful.

A leader has to be a person of CHARACTER. That means knowing the difference between right and wrong and having the guts to do the right thing. Abraham Lincoln once said, "If you want to test a man's character, give him power." A man of character does not ask a single soldier to die for a failed policy.

A leader must have COURAGE. Swagger isn't courage. Tough talk isn't courage. Courage in the twenty-first century doesn't mean posturing and bravado. If you're a politician, courage means taking a position even when you know it will cost you votes.

To be a leader you've got to have CONVICTION--a fire in your belly. You've got to have passion. You've got to really want to get something done. Congress was in session only ninety-seven days in 2006. That's eleven days less than the record set in 1948, when President Harry Truman coined the term *do-nothing* Congress. Most people would expect to be fired if they worked so little and had nothing to show for it. But Congress managed to find the time to vote itself a raise. Now, *that's* not leadership.

A leader should have CHARISMA. I'm not talking about being flashy. Charisma is the quality that makes people want to follow you. It's the ability to *inspire*. People follow a leader because they trust him. That's my definition of charisma.

A leader has to be COMPETENT. That seems obvious, doesn't it? You've got to know what you're doing. More important than that, you've got to surround yourself with people who know what *they're* doing. A leader has to be a problem solver.

You can't be a leader if you don't have COMMON SENSE. I call this Charlie Beacham's rule. When I was a young guy just starting out in the car business, one of my first jobs was as

Ford's zone manager in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. My boss was a guy named Charlie Beacham, who was the East Coast regional manager. Charlie was a big Southerner, with a warm drawl, a huge smile, and a core of steel. Charlie used to tell me, "Remember, Lee, the only thing you've got going for you as a human being is your ability to reason and your common sense. If you don't know a dip of horse[manure] from a dip of vanilla ice cream, you'll never make it."

Topic: Iacocca calls for leaders who possess nine personal qualities, all beginning with the letter C. Though all nine of these qualities might be important, it is unlikely that any one person could possess them all, at least in significant degree. Your assigned task is to name and discuss the *three* qualities *most* crucially needed in a leader. Support and justify your personal choices through discussion of specific examples. This writing topic, of course, has *no* correct answer. The persuasiveness of your answer will depend on the quality of your content, the clarity of your organization, and the fluency and grammatical correctness of your prose.