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Developing a Cross-Cultural Measure of Entrepreneurial Leadership: A New Perspective

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ABSTRACT: While entrepreneurial leadership is embraced in the popular press and in classrooms, academic knowledge remains underdeveloped. We develop the construct of entrepreneurial leadership and argue that it involves influencing and directing the performance of group members toward achieving those organizational goals that involve recognizing and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities. We discuss environmental, organizational, and follower-specific contingencies that may influence the success of entrepreneurial leadership, and we test the reliability and validity of an empirical measure for this construct (the ENTRELEAD scale). Using this novel measurement tool, we find that entrepreneurial leadership is more prevalent among founder-leaders than non-founder leaders, which indicates construct validity.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurial, Leadership, goals.

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial behaviors are increasingly important in a variety of contexts. In organizations, these behaviors foster innovation and adaptation to changing environments. As an example, the reasons for the success of Apple Inc. currently the most admired company in the world (Fortune 2012) are often listed to include the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of its workforce and the late CEO Steve Jobs. Even companies in less volatile industries need to constantly seize new business opportunities to remain viable. To achieve this, employees at every level of an organization have to embrace entrepreneurial behaviors and attitudes. Reflecting these developments in the corporate world, researchers have begun to investigate how to champion entrepreneurial behaviors in organizations. One of the approaches introduced in the literature is the idea of entrepreneurial leadership.

Entrepreneurial leadership is a distinctive style of leadership that can be present in an organization of any size, type or age. Leadership, in general, involves influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement (Rauch and Behling 1984, 46; House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla, Dorfman, Falkus, and Ashkanasy 1999, 184). It differs from management, which is focused on coordination and planning (Zaleznik 1977; Michael, Storey and Thomas 2002). In line with previous work at the intersection of leadership and entrepreneurship (e.g. Becherer, Mendenhall, and Eickhoff 2008; Cogliser and Brigham 2004; Fernald, Solomon, and Tarabishy 2005; Ireland, Hitt and Sirmon 2003; Gupta, MacMillan and Surie 2004; Vecchio 2003), we define entrepreneurial leadership as influencing and directing the performance of group members toward the achievement of organizational goals that involve recognizing and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities. With its explicit focus on leadership influence toward Entrepreneurial goals this definition is aligned with, yet different from previous definitions of entrepreneurial leadership. Entrepreneurial leadership is important because it recognizes the importance of individuals in the entrepreneurial process, yet it is aligned with the current research in leadership and entrepreneurship with its emphasis on doing and actions rather than traits or personalities (Cogliser and Brigham 2004; Gartner 1985; Stogdill 1948). Although recent research has explored entrepreneurial leadership style, progress has been hindered by the lack of conceptual development and adequate tools to measure leaders' entrepreneurial characteristics and behaviors. The purpose of our study is to address these two critical gaps.

To address the research gap concerning conceptual development we first provide a framework for entrepreneurial leadership that describes this leadership style, its operation and outcomes. Entrepreneurship is increasingly described in terms of actions and processes (McMullen and Shepherd 2006) and our framework focuses on actions, processes and attributes that are typical of entrepreneurial leadership style. To address the second research gap concerning the lack of tools to measure entrepreneurial leadership we develop and validate an empirical tool (ENTRELEAD) for the

measurement of entrepreneurial leadership.

Our research provides guidance for those small business managers who wonder what they should do to promote entrepreneurship at every level in their organizations. However, while entrepreneurial firms generally are considered to be new, small firms, we do not limit entrepreneurial leadership to such firms. Entrepreneurial leadership is relevant for incumbents that are trying to re-invent themselves through entrepreneurial initiatives in the ever-changing marketplace. Entrepreneurial leadership is also relevant for new, small businesses since entrepreneurs cannot successfully develop new ventures without displaying effective leadership behaviors (Baumol 1968; Cogliser and Brigham 2004). And with new venture creation, founders must lead because there are no standard operating procedures, management practices or organizational structures to fall back on (Hmieleski and Ensley 2007).

The paper is structured as follows: We first review existing research on entrepreneurial leadership and present the key elements of this leadership style. We then discuss related constructs, such as entrepreneurial orientation and other leadership styles. After describing the domain of entrepreneurial leadership we present ideas on how the process of entrepreneurial leadership works in practice with a focus on factors that influence the success of entrepreneurial leadership. We then propose and empirically test a scale to measure entrepreneurial leadership and conclude with implications for future research and managerial practice.

Entrepreneurial Leadership

Entrepreneurial leadership exists at the intersection of entrepreneurship and leadership. Leadership is the process of influence (Hunt 2004; Yukl 2008) and reflects a more complex phenomenon beyond an individual actor (Cogliser and Brigham 2004). In a similar way, entrepreneurship focuses not only on the entrepreneur, but on the intersection of that person and opportunities. In this research, we adopt Shane and Venkataraman's (2000, p. 218) view of entrepreneurship as the process by which opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated, and exploited. Entrepreneurial leadership is one important manifestation of such opportunity-focused behaviors in a multitude of organizational contexts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The success of entrepreneurial leadership in achieving the goals of opportunity recognition and exploitation depends not only on the attributes, behaviors and actions of the leaders themselves, but also on context (Antonakis and Autio 2006). Not all individuals are equally susceptible to similar leadership (Shin and Zhou 2003), so the outcomes of entrepreneurial leadership depend not only on the behaviors of the leader, but also on the characteristics of their followers as well as environmental and organizational characteristics (cf. Shamir and Howell 1999; Antonakis and Autio 2006).

Follower Susceptibility to Entrepreneurial Leadership. The critical role of followers is increasingly recognized in existing leadership theories (Shin and Zhou 2003). The opportunity- focused goals of entrepreneurial leadership are achieved through the interaction of leaders and their followers who have differing levels of susceptibility to the influences of such a leader. Three factors primarily explain follower susceptibility: the follower's entrepreneurial self-efficacy, their empowerment, and their level of entrepreneurial passion.

The self-regulatory mechanism of self-efficacy an individual's belief that she can accomplish a task (Bandura 1986) has been linked with outcomes such as entrepreneurial intentions (Zhao, Seibert, and Hills 2005). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is the degree to which an individual believes that she is capable of performing the roles and tasks of the entrepreneur (McGee, Peterson, Mueller, and Sequeira 2009), and is central to her susceptibility to entrepreneurial leadership. This role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a moderator affecting the strength of relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and the resulting opportunity recognition and exploitation is in line with previous studies that have examined the link between follower self-efficacy and their susceptibility to a number of other leadership styles (e.g. Walumbwa, Lawler, Avolio, Wang, and Shi 2005). In other words, entrepreneurial leadership will result in higher levels of opportunity recognition and exploitation in organizations where followers have higher levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

The topic of employee empowerment continues to receive considerable attention. Empowerment typically involves the delegation of authority from management to employees (Conger and Kanungo 1988); empowerment is the process by

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which a leader shares power with subordinates. However, not all employees are equally comfortable with being empowered (Argyris 1998). Empowerment comes with responsibility, and for some the responsibility may be an unwelcomed burden. Since pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities often falls outside of employee responsibilities, employee empowerment via removing conditions that foster a sense of powerlessness is necessary for the effects of entrepreneurial leadership to materialize as employees' opportunity-focused behaviors. This suggests that employee empowerment is another moderator that affects the strength of relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and its opportunity-focused outcomes.

Further, emotions and affective states influence entrepreneurship (Baron 2008) as well as leadership effectiveness (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, and May 2004). Cardon and her colleagues (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, and Drnovsek 2009) have argued that passion for entrepreneurship, defined as intense, positive feelings experienced by engagement in entrepreneurial activities, has a strong influence on entrepreneurial pursuits, and will also influence the outcomes of such activities. More simply, individuals who are passionate about entrepreneurial tasks such as identifying new opportunities are more likely to engage in these tasks and therefore achieve positive outcomes such as opportunity recognition. So, followers' entrepreneurial passion will positively correlate with their susceptibility to entrepreneurial leadership style, acting as another moderator of the entrepreneurial leadership – opportunity recognition and exploitation relationship.

Empirical Study

The construction and validation of a new scale for measuring entrepreneurial leadership was done with two studies. Study One gathered data using an instrument with a large number of items formulated based on literature review and theory development. After evaluating the reliability and factor structure in Study One, we limited the entrepreneurial leadership, “ENTRELEAD”, scale to eight items. We used Study Two to cross-validate the instrument while we investigated the empirical relation of ENTRELEAD with a widely-used measure for entrepreneurial orientation (Covin and Slevin 1989) and a scale that measures creativity-supportive leadership (Tierney and Farmer 2004). Typical for leadership measurements, the entrepreneurial leadership scale developed here is specific to a context where employees of an organization assess their managers' entrepreneurial leadership qualities. It is empirically different from measures such as entrepreneurial orientation, where often essentially one member of top management evaluates the perceived orientation of the whole organization.

Study One: Scale Development

Materials. We employed both deductive and inductive approaches for initial scale item generation (Hinkin 1995). First, the authors created numerous items to measure characteristics, behaviors and actions of entrepreneurial leaders. Sixty-three items were drawn from the literature and based on authors' empirical investigations of firms demonstrating entrepreneurial leadership. Since entrepreneurial opportunities are abstract and perceiving them is a subjective process, the scale items had to rely on attributes and behaviors that previous literature had linked to opportunity recognition and exploitation.

At the second stage, the items were subjected to pre-testing among experts on entrepreneurship and leadership research to further identify appropriate items. Six experts that we contacted all agreed to screen our initial item pool. The experts were selected based on their extensive (over twenty years each) personal experience as entrepreneurs, management scientists, and / or consultants. After this expert screening we created the final version of the instrument that included 18 items. The process of matching opportunity recognition dimensions with entrepreneurial leadership, and the resulting scale items are all listed. We also matched the items with previous research on entrepreneurial leadership. Similar to the international leadership study GLOBE (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta 2004) our items comprised both leader attributes and behaviors, as is commonplace (Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam 2003; Waldman, Ramirez, House, and Puranam 2001). The final stage of Study One was conducted with working students and university employees to determine final factor structure of the scale, as reported in the following.

Participants. Sample I (Study 1) data were collected from 381 working students and employees at three research universities in the United States (317 students, 64 university employees). Students were enrolled in either entrepreneurship or strategy classes, and the surveys were administered in a classroom setting in 2007-2008. The employee survey was administered online and an invitation to participate in the survey was emailed to 100 employees; 64 complete employee responses were received within two weeks. Of the total 381 surveys, 367

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Included complete data for all the entrepreneurial leadership items of interest. The demographics of both Sample I and Sample II.

Data Collection Procedure. The survey instructions were: “The next few questions ask about your IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR - the individual that you report to directly in your job. How well do the following statements describe him / her? (If you have many immediate supervisors, please pick one supervisor) Please circle one number for each statement”. Respondents were asked to rate each scale items on a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating that employees rate their supervisor higher on that item.

Analysis and Results. Following the standard procedures of scale development studies (Hinkin 1995; DeVellis 2003), we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (PCA) to analyze the factor structure of the scale (eigenvalue loading > 1.0 and the elbow bend in the screeplot) and to identify the factors that match our conceptualization. We analyzed the reliability of the factor(s) using Cronbach’s alpha, after which we further confirmed the factors using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS.

The result of the PCA was a four-factor solution. The first factor accounted for 37% of variance with six items. The second factor of two items accounted for an additional 8% of variance in the data. Many items had troublesome cross-loadings on multiple factors, and factors three and four only explained seven and six percent of variance, respectively. Overall, these results showed that some of our initial scale items should be disregarded, but others showed meaningful variance.

Internal consistency was tested using reliability analysis with Cronbach’s alpha in Sample I data. The ten items that showed meaningful loadings on factors one and two in the PCA were retained in the reliability analysis. The item-to-total correlations for all variables are consistent, exceeding 0.50 in all cases except one, “Is patient”. The 10-item scale shows a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.89.

Next, we examined two alternative models emerging from PCA using AMOS maximum likelihood factor analysis (confirmatory factor analysis, CFA). The models were evaluated by a variety of goodness of fit measures classified as absolute, relative, parsimonious, and population discrepancy. The measure of absolute fit used in this study is the chi-square test. Measures of relative fit compare the hypothesized model to the null model. The relative fit measures employed in this study are the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) (Bentler1990) and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) (Bentler and Bonett 1980). Measures of parsimonious fit illustrate whether the overall fit of the model has been accomplished by over-fitting the data. The parsimonious fit measure used is the chi-square divided by the degrees of freedom. Finally, the population discrepancy measure used is the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Browne and Cudeck 1993).

The results of Study One were replicated and extended in Study Two. Although Study One provided important evidence regarding the factor structure of the entrepreneurial leadership scale, several limitations needed to be addressed (Hinkin 1995). First was the lack of an independent confirmation of the eight-item model. Second, Study One did not allow a direct comparison between entrepreneurial leadership and other relevant constructs, such as entrepreneurial orientation and creativity-supporting leadership. To address these limitations and to provide evidence of discriminant validity in Study Two, we compared the entrepreneurial leadership scale items with entrepreneurial orientation (Covin and Slevin 1989) and Supervisor Creativity-Supportive Behavior (Tierney and Farmer 2004) scales. Finally, the validity of the scale could be improved if it were demonstrated that company founders receive higher scores on entrepreneurial leadership so this was assessed.

Materials. The survey included the eight items derived from Study One. After expert review, the wording of some items was changed to reflect uniformity (e.g. “Is a visionary” was rephrased as “Has a vision of the future of our business”).

Participants. Sample II data were collected from working adults in the United States and Finland. Seventeen companies of various sizes and industries in the US agreed to participate as survey sites, and 166 complete responses were collected from their employees (55% response rate).

Data Collection Procedure. Data collection was completed online using Questionpro (www.questionpro.com), which allowed randomization of items within the survey. A link to the online survey was embedded in an invitation email that

was sent to employees of participating organizations.

Analysis and Results. We conducted three exploratory factor analyses (PCA) to investigate the factor structure and discriminant validity of (1) entrepreneurial leadership and entrepreneurial orientation (Covin and Slevin 1989); (2) entrepreneurial leadership and supervisor creativity-supportive behavior scale (Tierney and Farmer 2004); and (3) entrepreneurial leadership and transformational leadership scale (Podsakoff et al. 1990) (eigen value loading > 1.0 and the elbow bend in the screeplot). We then replicated the CFA from Study One to confirm the factor structure of entrepreneurial leadership. Finally, we assessed whether having a firm founder as a leader influences respondents' assessment of entrepreneurial leadership.

With regard to entrepreneurial orientation and consistent with our conceptual development, entrepreneurial leadership items load on factor 1 (which explains 32% of variance), whereas entrepreneurial orientation items are divided between factors 2 and 3 (explaining 19 and 13 per cent of variance, respectively). Similar loadings of entrepreneurial orientation items have been found.

Combined, these findings provide support for discriminant validity of the entrepreneurial leadership construct. It is different from entrepreneurial orientation of the organization and from supervisor creativity-supportive behavior. While PCA suggests that entrepreneurial orientation and entrepreneurial leadership are two separate constructs, the positive correlation coefficient (0.472) between the mean value of the two scales is significant at $p < .001$. Also, the correlation between the scale mean for entrepreneurial leadership and supervisor creativity-supportive behavior scale is significant (0.812; $p < .001$). Because of the conceptual differences and overlap previously discussed, we anticipated that entrepreneurial leadership would be positively related to creativity-promoting leadership and entrepreneurial orientation, while being empirically distinct. Study 2 confirms these patterns.

We also used PCA to analyze entrepreneurial leadership items together with the 23 transformational leadership items from Podsakoff et al. (1990). This analysis is problematic since our sample size ($n=208$) limits the statistical conclusion validity of these results. Hence, these results are only provided as initial evidence of construct validity, and further testing is needed. When a PCA was run that included transformational leadership items (Podsakoff et al. 1990) and entrepreneurial leadership items, all eight entrepreneurial leadership items loaded on the first factor, which explains 23% of variance. In addition to the entrepreneurial leadership items, this factor also includes the following two “intellectual stimulation” items from the transformational leadership scale: “His/her ideas challenge members of the organization to re-examine some of the basic assumptions of their work”, and “Challenges people to think about old problems in new ways”. Clearly, intellectual stimulation plays a role in entrepreneurial leadership. Also, this first factor includes one item from the “articulating vision” sub-scale of Podsakoff et al. (1990) transformational leadership: “Is always seeking new opportunities for the organization”. Such behavior is aligned with our entrepreneurial leadership construct, and hence its loading with entrepreneurial leadership items is not unexpected. While these results from PCA are not a rigorous test of our entrepreneurial leadership scale validity because of the small sample size, they do seem to confirm our expectation that the intellectual stimulation component of transformational leadership partly overlaps with entrepreneurial leadership. Besides this overlap, transformational and entrepreneurial leadership are distinct constructs.

Cross-validation of the entrepreneurial leadership scale using confirmatory factor analysis in Sample II yields indexes of fit similar to those found in Sample I. While the high RMSEA value (0.10) warrants caution when interpreting the results from this sample, goodness-of-fit measures may vary from acceptable to unacceptable depending on the index used (Hair et al. 2006). Similar to Study One, when two correlated error terms are included, the fit indexes are improved (χ^2 (16, $N = 208$) = 47.88, a χ^2/df ratio of 2.99, a CFI of 0.97, a TLI of 0.96, and an RMSEA of 0.08. Overall, the model fit in Sample II is acceptable and validates the one factor entrepreneurial leadership model. An eight-item scale best measures employees' perceptions of their supervisor's entrepreneurial leadership, and shows a reliability Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 in Sample I data and 0.93 in Sample II data². The eight items of the ENTRELEAD scale are listed in the Appendix.

The construct validity of our ENTRELEAD scale would be improved if business founders actually received higher scores on the scale than non-founder managers. On the 7-point ENTRELEAD scale, founder-leaders ($n=60$) receive a mean of 5.59 ($s.d.= 0.98$), and non-founder leaders ($n=148$) a mean of 4.84 ($s.d.= 1.42$), t -test p -value < 0.001. Founders exhibit more of those attributes and behaviors that typify entrepreneurial leaders than other managers.

III. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Given the common occurrence of “entrepreneurial leadership” in academic writings, we were surprised to find that the literature has lacked a clear definition and has paid little attention to measurement issues. In this study we have addressed these research gaps by defining the Entrepreneurial leadership constructs, and by showing its relationship with closely-related constructs such as entrepreneurial orientation, transformational leadership, and creativity-supportive leadership. We have also introduced a model that focuses on the factors that moderate the effects of entrepreneurial leadership in an organization. Specifically, both environmental and organizational contexts as well as follower susceptibility to entrepreneurial leadership affect the relationship between this leadership style and its opportunity-focused outcomes. We have built and empirically tested a measurement scale, ENTRELEAD, for assessing entrepreneurial leadership.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Entrepreneurial leadership is a leadership style so we have treated it as a leadership construct, rather than as a strategic management construct (Covin and Slevin 2002; Ireland et al. 2003; McGrath and MacMillan 2000) or as a new venture phenomenon (Ensley, Hmieleski et al. 2006; Jensen and Luthans 2006; Swiercz and Lydon 2002). Entrepreneurial leadership is not specific to any one type of organization, industry, or culture and can flourish in new or established firms, for-profit or not-for-profit organizations, and formal or informal groups. Entrepreneurial leadership draws attention to enterprising individuals, even when the outcomes of this leadership style are assessed at the group and organizational levels.

Entrepreneurial leaders directly contribute to opportunity recognition and exploitation in their organizations, as well as influence their followers by acting as role models. They direct followers’ attention to entrepreneurial goals, and motivate and encourage them to pursue these goals. The eight-item ENTRELEAD scale (see Appendix) measures the perceptions of those who are being directly influenced by a leader. Similar to other leadership instruments, (e.g. Antoniadis et al. 2003; House et al. 2004; Waldman et al. 2001) the items of the scale comprise both leader attributes and behaviors. Our empirical results show that ENTRELEAD is both reliable and valid. Our validity tests have shown that founders receive higher scores in entrepreneurial leadership when rated by their employees than non-founders. This is encouraging since it demonstrates content validity as the instrument captures opportunity-focused leadership. We encourage further use and validation of the scale in any setting where subordinates can evaluate their supervisors along the scale dimensions.

While entrepreneurial leadership differs from a more general transformational leadership style through its focus on those leader attributes and behaviors that can contribute to entrepreneurial behaviors (opportunity recognition and exploitation), the two leadership styles share some common ground in the area of intellectual stimulation. In transformational leadership literature, intellectual stimulation has been described as those leader behaviors that challenge followers to re-examine some of their assumptions about their work, and rethink how it can be performed (Podsakoff et al. 1990). To the extent that these behaviors can contribute to recognizing new business opportunities, entrepreneurial- and transformational leadership overlap. Entrepreneurial leadership also shares some conceptual similarities with creativity- supportive leadership. Specifically, creativity is one factor in the opportunity recognition process (Schumpeter 1934; Ardichvili et al. 2003).

Implications for Practice

In terms of leadership practice, managers can benefit from this research by adopting the identified roles of an entrepreneurial leader. Bold, innovative, entrepreneurial behaviors are increasingly recognized as those that can revitalize organizations and provide a competitive advantage in dynamic markets. Economic and societal challenges have elicited calls for more entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors even in areas previously thought of as anti-entrepreneurial, such as government, education, and military. The conceptualization of entrepreneurial leadership provided here should guide individual leaders toward entrepreneurship. An entrepreneurial leader energizes followers by providing them with an exciting, opportunity focused vision rather than by giving rewards and punishments based on past performance. By living that vision through opportunity recognition and exploitation entrepreneurial leaders demonstrate their own empowerment. Effects of such opportunity- focused behavior and examples of empowerment should make followers feel more in control of the organization’s entrepreneurial future (and their own).

Ideas for Future Research

While we have outlined the key elements of entrepreneurial leadership, we have not focused on the individual or contextual antecedents of entrepreneurial leadership. Research on other forms of leadership has explored individual-level antecedents, such as leader demographics, cognitive ability, personality, attitudes and values, affect, and emotional intelligence. These factors may also prove important for the development of entrepreneurial leadership. We also encourage future research to examine leaders' positional and organizational context; particularly, the position leaders occupy within the organization may shape their entrepreneurial leadership style, and it may be that such leadership occurs more frequently higher in the hierarchy. Previous research suggests that leaders located at higher levels of management or in decentralized, organic organizations may enjoy higher discretion (Shamir and Howell 1999), enabling them to engage in entrepreneurial leadership. Finally, previous literature suggests that leaders have a key role in facilitating the adaptation of teams and individuals (e.g. Kozlowski et al. 2009). The role of an entrepreneurial leader as someone who facilitates the adaptation of followers' entrepreneurial passion and self-efficacy is worthy of future research.

Limitations

A limitation of our empirical approach is reliance on single-informant data at a single point of time. We were unable to assess, for example, the consequences of entrepreneurial leadership over time. Future research should validate the instrument in a longitudinal setting where outcomes such as recognized and exploited opportunities can be assessed. Research will benefit from having multiple followers assess one leader (inter-rater reliability), and from the development of a self-assessment tool for leaders to evaluate their own entrepreneurial leadership. Finally, our small sample size prevented us from running factor analyses that would have simultaneously included all the scales we wanted to assess for discriminant validity. Larger sample sizes in the future will allow more rigorous tests of the factor structure of ENTRLEAD in comparison to related constructs.

V. CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurial leaders focus on promoting opportunity recognition and exploitation through their own actions and through their influence on others. By setting an example through engaging in entrepreneurial behaviors, they encourage others to emulate their behavior and challenge the status quo. The entrepreneurial leader's passion, creativity and vision motivate others to experiment and learn for themselves. Such leadership is an integrated characteristic of organizations that seize and profit from new opportunities as they arise.

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