

People management case study

[Education](#)



The SITUATION: the Ben Brooks' dilemma Ben Brook, 43 years old, a solid professional with 20 years of experience at Livingstone Corp. , is extremely disappointed for not having been promoted CEO of his company. For the first time in his life, he is reflecting about his personal and professional history and choices, trying to get some lessons for the future. He considers quitting his company for a CEO job in another one. The FACTS: Ben Brooks' personal and professional life Our starting point will be to understand (through a 3 pages letter) who Ben is as a person, and as a professional.

We can deduce several keypersonalityclues, based on the facts in the letter: ? An "achiever": born in 1935, graduated with honors, joins Livingstone at the age of 23, promoted to an important position after only 4 years in the company, promoted youngest ever Executive VP (35 years old) after 12 years in the company. ? Loyal to the company and proud of it: entirecareerat Livingstone (20 years) ? "Work-aholic" at the expense of hisfamily: regularly spend evenings and weekends in the office. Forgets about taking vacation.

Immersed by work, leaves all energies in the office and fails in dedicated some to his wife and kids. One anecdote: afterdivorce, lives in a NYC hotel close to the office. ? Self-confident: believes others will notice and reward him for his own professional skills. ? Small (or none) circle of friends: having written this letter, at this point in time, to a professor he has neither seen nor talked to in the past 20 years seems like a strong sign that he had nobody closer with whom share his dilemma. The ANALYSIS: Ben Brooks' profile 1. Psychological Type

With the limited information available in the letter, we can guess Ben is an NT TYPE (“ Intuitive Rational”): Ben is fascinated by power, he is very ambitious and believes he will progress and be recognized / rewarded by others as a result of his own personal competences. As we said, he is a “ work-aholic”, his competence seems never enough to him and he lives permanently with the fear to “ fail” (ie. to not getting as high as he believes he deserves). He is a “ visionary” and permanently challenges the status-quo: a good example is the “ direct cost model” Ben developed and implemented at Livingstone only 2 years after having joined the company.

In his professional relationships with others, NT types are arrogant in that sense that they assume a small contribution from his peers and team since, ultimately, “ they are not as good as I am”. At the same time, as contradictory as it may seem, he can be as highly demanding with others as he is with himself. The NT types could go as far as hurting others’ feelings without even noticing it. Worth noting: there is nevertheless one component in Ben’s personality which could have led us to classify him rather as an SJ type.

Ben is committed to deliver on his promises and objectives and, in that respect, he values duty above all and dedicates all of his time and energy to his work. That said, an SJ type is also very sensitive to others, to bringing harmony to the relationships and his “ duty sense” goes beyond work to also his family. This is clearly not the case for Ben. ? To further complete this picture, Ben seems to be more of an INTROVERTED type: difficult to say through the letter but he does not seem like a very social or externally-focused person.

He does not seem to be sourcing his energy from others, but rather from himself and his work. He definitely prefers communicating in written, even to a professor he has not seen for the past 20 years (!) which clearly shows how little genuine interest he has in knowing how others (the professor) are doing: he dedicates 3 pages to talking exclusively about himself and his dilemma. On the 4th axe, Ben seems more like a JUDGEMENT type: he enjoys planning his work and is excited about reaching objectives. That said, we do not have much more information about this topic. 2.

Motivational profile Reading through his letter, we can sense Ben has consistently been moved by mostly INTRINSIC MOTIVATIONS, with some component of EXTRINSIC MOTIVATIONS but a total absence of TRANSCENDENT MOTIVATIONS. Let's elaborate slightly more: Most important motivation for Ben seems to have been his own self-fulfillment at work, the satisfaction of being a competent professional facing challenges and delivering results (INTRINSIC MOTIVATION) with the objective of being rewarded by the company with increasingly important jobs, power and status (EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION).

Economic compensation, although also important (as for most of us), seems to play a secondary role for Ben. In his letter, he explains his jobs and some key business achievements yet never mentions other people, his teams, the role they played on his success or the impact he, as a manager, had on their development (lack of TRANSCENDENT MOTIVATIONS). This analysis is coherent with the conclusion we can drive from his (lack of) personal life: Ben acknowledges he failed in dedicating time and energy to his family and was not surprised when his wife left him.

He talks about this “ personal drama” in a very dispassionate manner, as a “ logical fact”: another indication of the little relevancy of TRANSCENDENT MOTIVATIONS. How does this affect his LEADERSHIP ABILITY? Nobody, no matter how good of a manager he/she is, could be perceived as a true leader by his/her organization, if he/she does not display a minimum of TRANSCENDENT MOTIVATION, ie. a unique interest and empathy about others and about doing what is better for others’ well-being. This motivation is a must in order to be able to generate VALUES in the organization.

Ben thought his personal needs would be fulfilled with MATERIAL and PROFESSIONAL components. He disregarded AFFECTIVE needs or, equally worrying, he thought it was other people’s role (his wife) to provide him unilaterally with some affection. 3. Leadership Style and Competencies Ben appears as an EXECUTIVE LEADER, a “ DOER”. He has vision for the business and the skills to get there. He relentlessly focus on results, on delivering on objectives and is highly involved and committed to do so.

This single-minded focus leaves little room for other people: he is egocentric and lacks genuine interest in others. He is a poor listener and could end up manipulating others (even unconsciously) in his will to get results at any cost. Ben is ambitious about his career and concerned about his own success above all. Through his 20 years of successful career progression, Ben has certainly demonstrated both BUSINESS and MANAGING COMPETENCIES (otherwise he would probably not have become Executive VP).

As previously said, Ben has a vision for the business, knows how to administrate people and resources in order to be effective in delivering results. On the contrary, lacking of Transcendent Motivations, Ben has been

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unable of bringing a SENSE OF MISSION to his leadership. Further, he has probably even been unconscious and unaware of the importance of this sense of mission. Ben has lacked the critical PERSONAL COMPETENCIES required to lead others behind a common “ vision”, a higher level commitment than merely objectives or tasks.

With strong Business and Managing competencies, Ben has been able through his career to deliver results and to motivate his teams “ on the short-term” by merely leveraging on their extrinsic and intrinsic motivations (LIDERANCA TRANSFORMADORA). Nevertheless, as it is, Ben would be unable to motivate an organization behind a higher-end, longer-term mission (LIDERANCA TRANSCENDENTE), and this is certainly what Livingstone top management has identified as a gap for Ben to become the company CEO.

In the words of another leadership specialist, Ben is certainly a COMPETENT MANAGER, he organizes people and resources to reach objectives. He is probably an EFFECTIVE LEADER, with a vision to engage others towards the pursuit of stretching goals. But he is not at the top leadership level, the LEVEL 5 EXECUTIVE, who builds solid organizations and preaches with his own example and humility, rallying the organization behind a common mission, one which transcends extrinsic and intrinsic motivations to truly make an impact on people’s well-being and, ultimately, on the society.

Advice I would give to Ben Brooks Throughout the above analysis, the advice I would give to Ben is to take quality time and start a well-thought process of personal change. Any personal change process requires: -First, to acknowledge the need for a personal and a professional change: Ben has done so already, at least on the professional side, as we can see in his letter.

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He does not yet seem concerned about the importance of a well-balanced personal and emotional life and its positive impact on his leadership ability. Second, the willingness to change: Ben is starting to realize this as he says he will certainly behave differently if he joins a new company. -Third, to act, to plan the change and to execute it, as an iterative process. For a mid-aged person like Ben, with 20 years of professional experience in the same company (hence, already with a personal risk-aversion profile), changing profoundly anchored habits will be a very difficult exercise.

Further, Ben is currently frustrated and angry about his top management decision and he will probably lack the necessary objectivity in analyzing his own case and the true reasons why they believe he is not ready to be the CEO the company needs. I would hence advice Ben to reach out to a professional coach who, same as psychiatrics do, will help him dissect the information and drive conclusions and who will design, with him, the steps needed for the change.

I would advise him to start by complementing his own in-depth reflection with the feedback he could get from several peers, subordinates and friends/family about who is Ben, how does he behaves, how is he perceived. This will be the starting point, the raw material to start the work with the coach. Also importantly, this process will take significant time and effort, yet it is crucial if he wants to become not only a better rounded senior leader for an organization, but also a happier person. I would suggest that he puts aside, for the moment, his prospection for new jobs.

Ideally, if this is financially possible, he would quit his job and dedicate some time (some months) entirely to himself and his change process. Probably 20

years of experience do “ buy you” the right to do so and the personal “ win” will be worth the time and the salary. Ultimately, I believe Ben will be better off leaving his company: he has accumulated significant frustration that will impact him in his daily work and, as he says, he will probably not make it to CEO there in the mid-term. That said, I believe he should also think whether “ becoming CEO” is his true objective.

The title “ per se” does not say much. He should be more factual in writing down the “ must have” and the “ negotiable elements” of the ideal job he wants and, with the help of his coach, identify the type of jobs and, as importantly, the type of companies where he could find it. In my opinion, these are the lessons Ben Brooks should learn for the future Driven by his own professional ambition, Ben has failed in taking a “ helicopter view” to evaluate his personal and professional life on a permanent mode.

He has failed in growing as a leader and as a person to go beyond efficacy (delivering on results), to leave a positive mark on those surrounding him and to make his beloved ones happier and his collaborators more profoundly committed about a mission. A leader is not a “ top level” leader if he does not: -First, knows himself (“ Self-Awareness”), his motivations, his style, his strengths and weaknesses, the impact he makes on others, -Leverages his own emotions and skills to be more effective and empathic in working with others, to get the most out of them (Emotional Intelligence) -Has a genuine interest for other people, Behaves as a change agent, an influential leader well beyond a “ doer” delivering business results -Knows how to manage his own career and his personal time and, ultimately, balances both (Work Life Balance) to be an example as a professional but also as a human being. Ben

invested all his time and energy on his own effectiveness as a manager and thought this would be enough to take him where he wanted to be.

He invested all the time in his company, his projects and results and failed to dedicate time and energy to his beloved ones but also to himself. The best investment one can make, at any time in life, is the investment made to become a better person and a better leader, more genuine and more engaged to excel not only in results, but also in the positive impact we have on others. Ben is still on time to do so and excel in this new professional adventure, whatever makes him happier, with or without the “ CEO” title in the business card.