

Conscious Intelligence (CQ) and Level 5 Leadership (Jim Collins)

The initial blog on our new CQ offering described what we mean by the term. To summarize that piece, CQ is about leaders moving beyond their Ego. Most would agree that being an Ego driven leader is not optimal, as it largely represents being on auto-pilot. The Ego is a left-over program from our youth which provided for our identity and survival needs. CQ opens the door to much greater freedom of choice and peace of mind.

So, all that sounds nice enough, but are there examples of CQ leaders in the world? Who are they? What organizations do they lead?

Yes, there are examples of CQ leaders. Jim Collins—*Built to Last* and *Good to Great*—writes about them in these books. He calls them Level 5 leaders. Their most compelling characteristics are humility and relentless willpower. As often the case with Collins, that’s a paradox. Yin and Yang of leadership combined into one person. Interestingly, Collins bases his criteria for great leadership on the same factor that CQ addresses: Ego. Collins writes that Level 5 leaders “must subjugate their egoistic needs to the greater ambition of building something larger and more lasting than themselves.”¹ Collins believes that many leaders will not allow their Ego needs to be tamed. He asserts “the personal ambitions that often drive people to positions of power stand at odds with the humility required for Level 5 leadership.”

When asked, “How does one develop into a Level 5 leader?” Collins gave this response:

For your own development, I would love to be able to give you a list of steps for becoming Level 5, but we have no solid research data that would support a credible list. Our research exposed Level 5 as a key component inside the black box of what it takes to shift a company from good to great. Yet inside that black box is yet another black box—namely, the inner development of a person to Level 5. We could speculate on what might be inside that inner black box, but it would mostly be just that—speculation. So, in short, Level 5 is a very satisfying idea, a powerful idea, and, to produce the best transitions from good to great, perhaps an essential idea. A “Ten-Step List to Level 5” would trivialize the concept.

Although Collins does not believe there is a simple “ten-step” list to reach Level 5 leadership, he does believe there is a large group of people who have the potential to become Level 5 leaders. He writes:

the capability resides within them, perhaps buried or ignored, but there, nonetheless. And under the right circumstances—self-reflection, conscious personal development, a mentor, a great teacher, loving parents, a significant life experience, a Level 5 boss, or any number of other factors—they begin to develop.

So, who are these leaders who have achieved Level 5? Collins writes about them extensively in *Good to Great* and says that they are models for the rest of us to study and emulate. In his words,

Darwin Smith, Colman Mockler, Alan Wurtzel, and all the other Level 5s we learned about have become models for us, something worthy to aspire toward. Whether or not we make it all the way to Level 5, it is worth the effort. For like all basic truths about what is best in human beings, when we catch a glimpse of that truth, we know that our own lives and all that we touch will be the better for the effort.

The purpose of this short blog on Level 5 leadership is to further describe what we mean by CQ (conscious leadership). And to show that CQ is not an abstract bit of New Age woo-woo, we invoke Collins, a recognized expert in the field of leadership, to legitimize the pursuit of CQ. Collins’ Level 5 leadership is very much the same

¹ See Collins’ blog: https://www.jimcollins.com/article_topics/articles/can-you-grow-into-level-5.html

concept as CQ. Both emphasize the importance of overcoming the Ego as the main driver of our thinking and behavior.

The main difference between Collins and FCG is that we do believe there is a training to develop Level 5 leaders (i.e. CQ leaders). We have developed a curriculum specifically aimed at taming the Ego and allowing our Conscious Self to emerge as a calmer, wiser and more compassionate leader.

So, as I closed the initial blog:

FCG invites you to consider joining us on this path to greater personal and professional success via learning the skills of CQ. If you are at all curious, let us know. Meanwhile, continue reading these blogs which explore the topic in more detail.

With sincere wishes to awaken the conscious leader in all of us,

The CQ Team at FCG