

**POWER OVER vs. POWER TO THE**  
**PEOPLE**



# POWER OVER PEOPLE VS POWER TO THE PEOPLE

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Despite a shared acceptance, at least in theory, of the importance of people to an organisation, there remains a challenge when it comes to harnessing the full potential of these people.

An analysis of assessment data from East Africa leaders shows that this problem may be rooted in personality. Personality may be driving leaders to exercise Power Over People, as opposed to giving Power to the People.



# THE TASK OF A LEADER

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*Executive leaders may disagree on organizational strategies, resource allocation, and key business priorities. However, it is the rare executive who will argue against the importance of people as a critical resource in the achievement of strategic objectives.*

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The work of leaders has been well documented to include aligning people; motivating and inspiring them towards a compelling vision, empowering them to want to achieve that vision, and creating strategies that enable them to succeed.

According to Kotter, “motivation and inspiration energize people, not by pushing them in the right direction as control mechanisms do, but by satisfying basic needs for achievement, a sense of belonging, recognition, self-esteem, a feeling of control over one’s life and the ability to live up to one’s ideas.” (Kotter, 2001, Harvard Business Review).

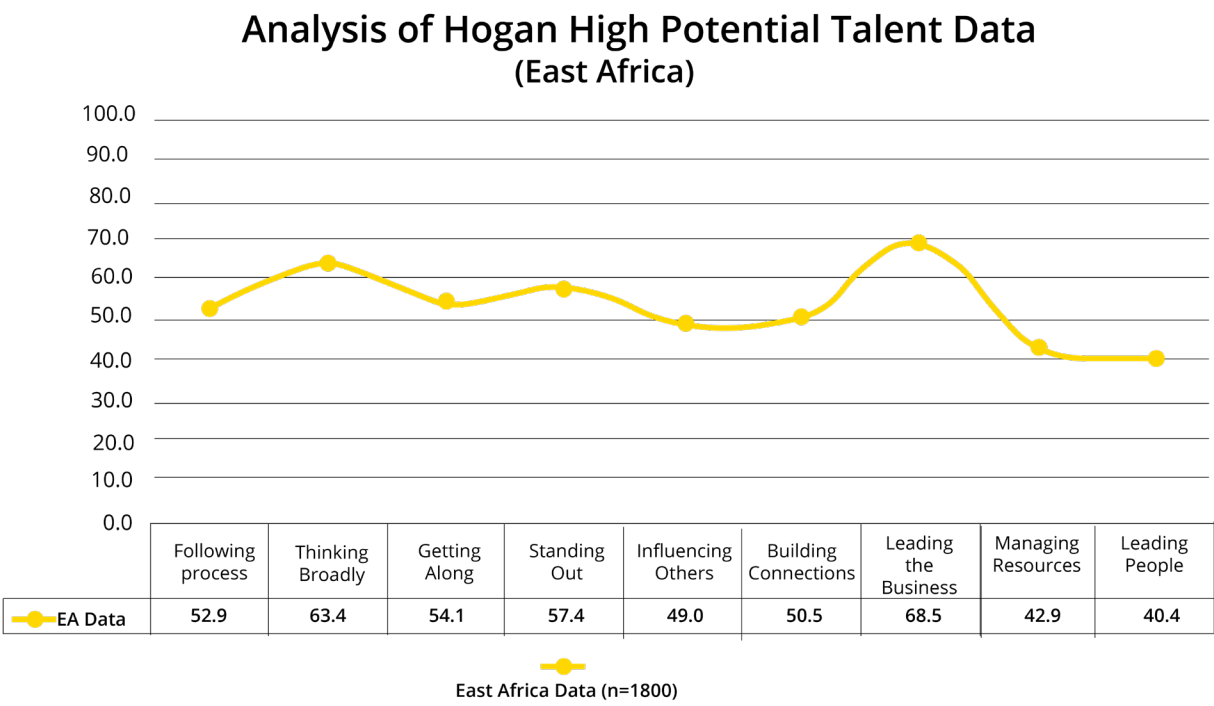
Leaders must do this by giving power to the people as opposed to exercising power over people. However, aligning people is not enough, leaders must also identify adaptive challenges and create the platform and space for people to ‘confront the challenge, adjust their values, change perspectives, and learn new habits. (HBR, The Work of Leadership, 2002).

Leadership, then, is about striking that delicate balance between people and bottom line results. Leaders must be versatile in catering to people matters that have to do with Getting Along, Influencing Others and Leading People and meeting the business priorities of Leading the Business, Standing Out and Thinking Broadly (Competencies from the Hogan High Potential Assessment).

# THE DATA

**1800+** Number of East African leaders, across different industries, whose personality data was analyzed by Career Connections.

Analysis was done using the **Hogan High Potential Talent Report** - a cutting-edge assessment that provides insights into how leaders show potential to lead core business matters without overlooking critical people priorities.



Results indicate that the leaders assessed have a high propensity to focus on aspects that have to do with self and the business. These leaders scored highest on **Leading the Business, Thinking Broadly, and Standing Out**. The lowest scores on average were on Leading People, Managing Resources, and Influencing Others.

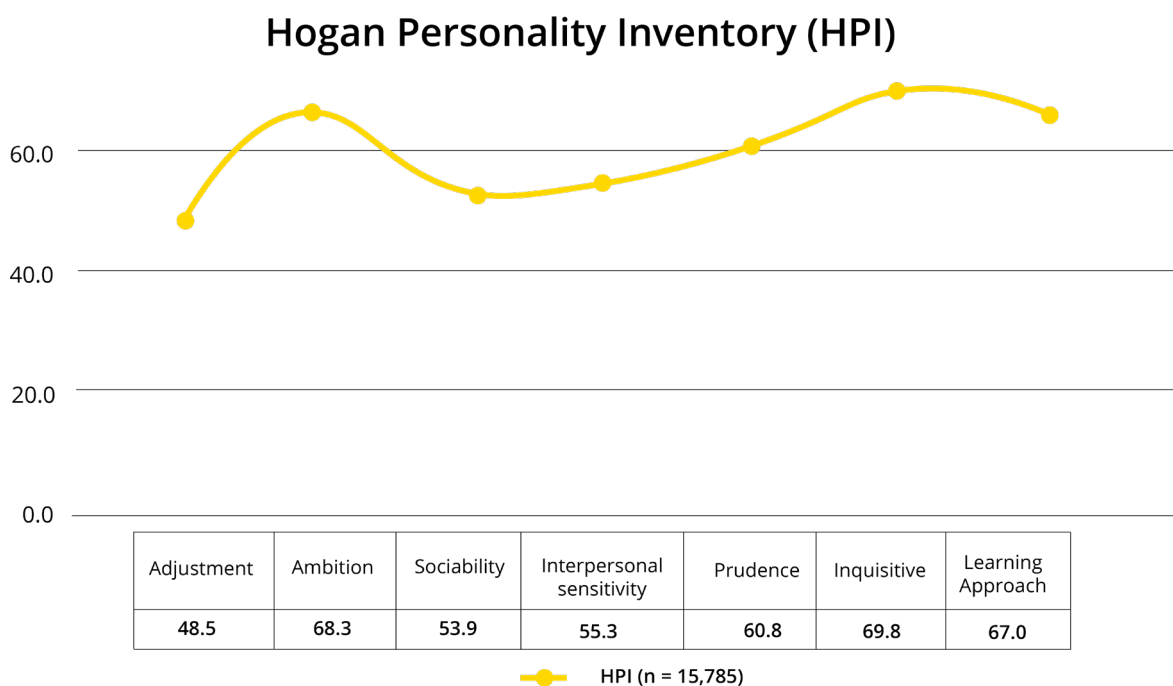


Further analysis of data from more than 15,000 leaders on the Hogan Personality Inventory showed a general tendency among leaders to score high (above 65) on personality attributes that have to do with achievement and competition (Ambition) and lower on those traits that have to do with relationship building (Sociability and Interpersonal Sensitivity).

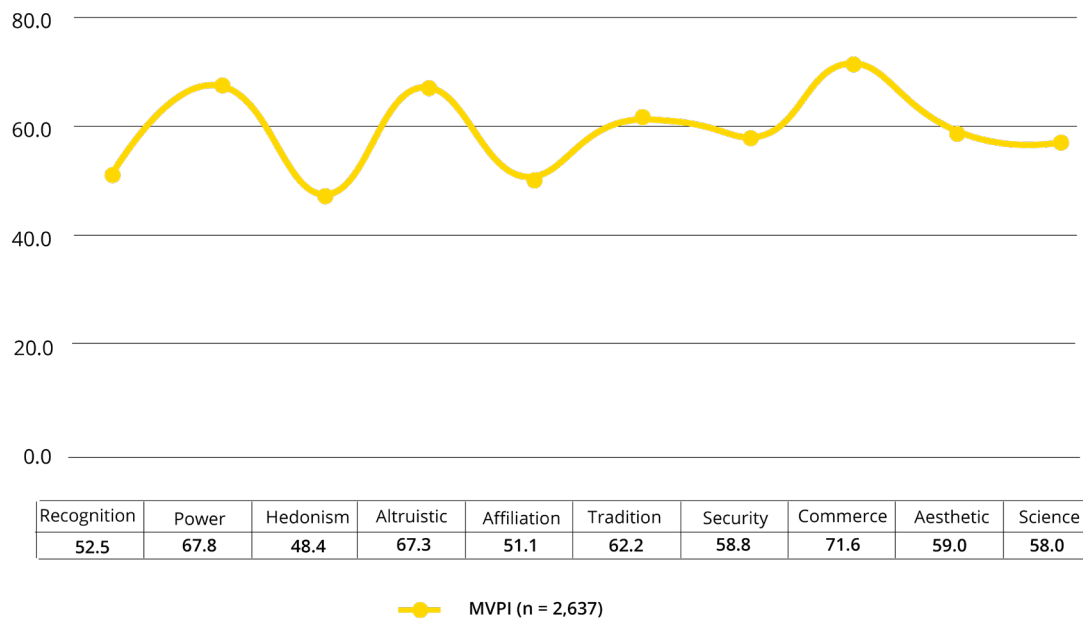
A similar trend was observed when core drivers and motivators among leaders were evaluated using the Hogan Motives, Values, and Preferences Inventory. The data revealed that East African leaders,

in particular, are generally driven by accomplishment (Power) and material success (Commerce).

These leaders are likely to use their income as a form of self-evaluation. Conversely, they are less likely to show interest in interacting with others (especially with strangers, due to Affiliation scores) and will likely prefer to work independently with little concern about pleasing others or interest in social approval. The data also indicates that the leaders are motivated by altruism and the desire to help others, improve society, and build better workplaces.



## Motives, Values and Preferences Inventory (MVPI) (East Africa)



There is, therefore, an opportunity to harness this core motive and personal interest in service to both business and people priorities.

While this data may indicate a greater inclination towards exercising power over people as opposed to giving power to the people; it does also offer

insight into how organizations may reconfigure leadership development programmes. These assessment results set the stage for developmental programmes that begin at the core of a leaders' personality and interests and terminate with a balanced delivery of what the business demands, without sacrificing the needs of the people.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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**What do the above findings mean for leaders and leadership development? The good news is that the personality of leaders shows they are driven to succeed; first as individuals.**

The gap for leadership development lies in fitting the people agenda into the leader's ambitions without sacrificing achievement, while enhancing success. Our data implies three key areas that warrant attention in the design and rollout of leadership development that gives power to the people as opposed to exercising power over people.

## CREATING THE NON-DIRECTIVE LEADER

The data implies that leaders are more likely to adopt a directive approach in dealing with people in order to lead the business and focus on the broader strategic goals. There is an opportunity to develop commitment by creating engagement, collaboration, and team learning.

To this end, leadership development programmes should focus on developing leadership capacity to promote dialogue by enabling leaders

to ask rather than tell people what to do and pull potential out of people rather than push commands at them.

Skills such as coaching and mentoring promote active listening, collaboration, and inquiry, thereby capitalizing on the high degree of inquisitiveness and learning approach as indicated by the East Africa leaders' data while helping leaders to create space for others to participate.



## RECOGNIZING HUMILITY IN LEADERSHIP

Driven by ambition, power, and commerce, leaders are less likely to display humility, be receptive to feedback, or be willing to learn from others. Yet, we know from research that there is a place for the paradoxical leader who consistently combines a high degree of humility with an intense desire to succeed at a professional level.

The Level 5 Leader, according to a 2001, Harvard Business Review article by Jim Collins, is one who “channels ambition into the company, not the self, sets up successors for even more greatness,

and looks in the mirror, not out the window, to apportion responsibility for poor results; never blaming other people, external factors, or bad luck” (HBR, Level 5 Leadership, 2001).

To achieve Level 5 leadership, leaders must practice introspection to enhance self-awareness, attend to people first and strategy second, engage mentors for support, even while mentoring and listening to others, thereby leveraging the drive towards altruism and the desire to learn.

## LEVERAGING THE ENGAGING LEADER

The personality scores of East Africa leaders indicate that they will be seen to be in charge, decisive, and result-oriented. If they do not possess a high degree of self-awareness or be challenged through targeted developmental interventions, these leaders are likely to stand out alone rather than as part of a team.

The leaders will be less engaging and show little interest in galvanizing others towards shared goals; unless those goals meet their motivations. Coupled with competing, and sometimes conflicting, priorities for

profitability, business growth, and return for shareholders, it is more and more likely that the people agenda will suffer even as the leader continues to thrive.

The challenge for leaders, therefore, lies in developing the skills needed to harness the power of their people by leveraging their teams’ creativity, ingenuity, and innovative ideas. In so doing, leaders will create a platform that will enable them to meet business goals for profitability, while giving people a chance to make a meaningful contribution.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Teckie Karoki is the Lead Consultant, Leadership Coaching and Change unit in Career Connections. Teckie is a qualified talent development professional with experience in leadership development program design, advisory, and delivery, executive coaching, competency-based interviewing, and assessments for leadership development. Her passion lies in developing individuals to achieve their potential while making a meaningful contribution to their organization's strategy.

Teckie completed her doctoral studies in Leadership and Management from Walden university (USA). Other qualifications include an MBA (Marketing) from

Kennesaw State University (USA), a Bachelors in Business Administration and Marketing from Daystar University. She has completed the Academy of Executive Coaching Practitioner Diploma in Executive Coaching programme.

Teckie is certified in the application and feedback on various leadership assessments tools; including Hogan Assessments, Leadership Versatility Index (LVI), and is also a certified behavioural assessor. She is accredited by PSI Talent as a facilitator of the Competency Based Interviewing Skills Certification.



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