

TRANSFORMATIONAL TRAITS

What sets great leaders apart in an age of disruption.

By Shideh Sedgh Bina and Nathan Owen Rosenberg Sr.

Disruptive leadership is redundant. The essential practice of leadership is disruptive, especially in today's business environment, where leaders must often reject the status quo and set forth a transformative new trajectory. Instead, executives need to focus on the traits that define transformational leaders:

1. They create bold futures. Transformative leaders do not let the future happen to them. They take a stand and determine what they want the future to be, and then make it so.

2. They act in the face of uncertainty. When visibility is clouded or roadblocks materialize, transformative leaders do not fade away and give up. Instead, they push forward—never recklessly—to seek out their goal, even if they are not sure it is the “right” way forward.

3. They blaze trails. They do not limit themselves to what has been done. Instead, they understand they must forge a new path in the marketplace to create breakthrough results.

4. They bring others along. Transformative leaders do not enter the future alone, nor do they force people to follow or comply with them. They enroll others in their vision, gaining their commitment to the cause through conversation and authenticity.

5. They create order out of chaos. Innovation is unpredictable and can often lead to chaos. Transformational leaders must navigate that complexity, simplify it and turn it into clear direction for their organization and teams.

6. They are forever curious. Transformative leaders do not limit their perspective to one industry or even just business topics. They are always reading, always learning, always broadening the knowledge base they pull from when making decisions or composing opinions.

7. Their frame of reference is the future, not the past. By focusing on the past, we often limit ourselves because we tend to put too much credence in previous failures or try to copy past successes. Transformational leaders do not limit future endeavors with the beliefs or assumptions established by past experiences.

8. They are action-oriented. They do not just think differently, they act differently. As INSEAD professor Herminia Ibarra writes in her book *Act Like a Leader, Think Like a Leader*, “We try something new and then observe the results—how it feels to us, how others around us react—and only later reflect on and perhaps internalize what our experience taught us. In other words, we act like a leader and then think like a leader.”

Shideh Sedgh Bina and **Nathan O. Rosenberg Sr.** are founding partners at Insigniam.