

JOBS

THE TIPS

Developing leadership skills

You can be a workplace leader without having a title. Tasks like mentoring, sharing celebrations with employees, giving back to the community and not blowing your own horn are traits that make for good leaders in any profession. — *Cheri Swales, Monster.com*

By **Melissa Erickson**
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Is climbing the corporate ladder a goal for most workers? A new survey shows the answer is a resounding “no.”

Most American workers are not aiming for the corner office, according to a new CareerBuilder survey about leadership in the workplace. About one-third (34 percent) of workers aspire to leadership positions, with only 7 percent aiming for senior or C-level management.

By an 11 percentage point margin, men (40 percent) are more likely than women (29 percent) to desire a leadership role. Additionally, African-Americans (39 percent) and LGBT (44 percent) workers are more likely to aspire to a leadership role than the national average. Thirty-two percent of workers with disabilities aspire to leadership positions, as well as 35 percent of Hispanics — both near the national average.

“I think there can be a perception that the higher you climb, the less of a life you will have. Sometimes that is accurate, but sometimes it is just a perception because there are companies out there that value and provide life balance,” said career coach Hallie Crawford, founder of www.HallieCrawford.com.

“Some people also just don’t want a management position. For example, I’ve had clients who have had to manage people before and they flat out don’t like it so they want to move back down.

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A view of the top

Survey finds fewer aiming for top management roles

Others don’t value or care about the prestige that comes up with moving up the ladder. It’s not in their DNA or part of their value system. So they don’t pursue it,” Crawford said.

Some workers don’t pursue leadership roles because they don’t feel they have the necessary educational background.

“The survey identified that 17 percent of the respondents didn’t believe they had the necessary education to become a leader in their organization. And 20 percent believed there was a ‘glass ceiling’ blocking their entry into leadership roles. In some cases, these beliefs may be true, but these assumptions may be incorrect and prevent people from applying for

a leadership role. Unfortunately if you don’t try for a position, you won’t get it,” said leadership and career coach Donna Schilder.

But an educational degree is not all that matters for true leaders.

“I help people see that their experience is valuable and may be enough to secure the position they want. Or, sometimes, they may just need a few courses to build up their skills, not necessarily an entire degree,” Schilder said.

“In some cases, I’ve had clients who are already in a manager or director position, but they feel they can’t seek a new position outside their company because they don’t have a bachelor’s or master’s

degree. They don’t realize that their experience is very valuable, and that many employers would not require a seasoned, experienced leader have a degree or advanced degree. It’s amazing how beliefs can hold people back from getting what they want,” Schilder said.

If you’re a person who doesn’t crave a seat behind the big desk, there are still ways to stand out as a leader at work, said Debra Wheatman, president, Careers Done Write.

“Leadership comes in many forms. You could lead a project or implement a new software. You could be the top salesperson or an expert at dealing with your peers. You can be a leader among your peers by setting a positive example. Be a problem solver or someone who fills in when the boss is away from the office. You don’t have to a designated leader to take on a leadership role,” Wheatman said.

“While most workers don’t want a top job, it is important for organizational leaders to promote a culture of meritocracy in which all workers, regardless of gender, race or sexual orientation, are able to reach senior-level roles based on their skills and past contributions alone,” said Rosemary Haefner, vice president of human resources at CareerBuilder. “The survey found that employees at companies that have initiatives to support aspiring female and minority leaders are far less likely to say a glass ceiling holds individuals back.”

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