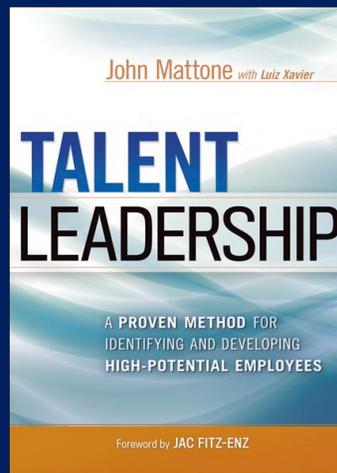# A Discussion with the Author of Talent Leadership…….. John Mattone

"Through countless interviews, extensive global travel, and years of consulting and coaching hundreds of organizations and leaders, John Mattone has developed a fool-proof method for identifying and developing leaders and prospective leaders. In his new book, John shares knowledge that took him three decades to amass. How fortunate that we can benefit from his wisdom simply by reading Talent Leadership."
—Marshall Goldsmith, million-selling author of the New York Times bestsellers
MOJO **and** *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

There are books about talent management......but, your book is about talent leadership. Can you explain the difference between the two?

*The research I do in the area of talent and leadership development is the foundation of my writing, speaking, executive coaching and consulting. My most recent global study was completed a year ago and was published by Pearson. I interviewed and surveyed over 150 CEO's and Heads of HR and Talent Management. I asked a lot of questions but the #1 issue cited by our respondents was their need to **identify and develop future leaders.** I have known this for years but of course it is always helpful to get corroborative evidence. If you are the CEO of a typical organization anywhere in the world—except India and a few South American and African countries—you actually are faced with two major issues: One, anywhere from 40-70% of your management team is expected to retire in the next five years; and second, when you look at your supply pool of available talent to take these critical roles, your Gen X population is in massive short supply and your Gen Y population is too young and not ready. In some respects it is a global demographic issue but, most importantly, my research clearly identified that the main issue is that most companies are not doing a good job looking deep into their organizations at younger individual contributors who possess the capability to become great leaders and future senior executives. There is massive leadership talent "hiding" in most organizations and these people need to be **identified** and **developed.***

My book addresses this issue "head on". I wrote the book for heads of HR and talent management but also CEO's and senior operating executives so they can start creating and implementing a stronger strategic approach to talent so ultimately they can mitigate operating risk and drive breakthrough operating results. There are some good books out there on "talent management"; however, I wrote "Talent Leadership" to help organizations strengthen their talent management practices—the "nuts and bolts" of talent management as a means to unlocking and unleashing talent—current and future leaders—to drive impressive operating results.

Tell us how organizations can drive impressive "bottom line" results by strengthening their talent management and leadership development practices?

When I meet with CEO's I like to ask them what they think their organization's number one differentiator is. 80% of the time, they say "It's our people. It's out talent". Approximately 20% of the time, they will say "It's our brand, products, services, databases, technology….and, eventually they will get to people". I then examine their operating metrics. It's interesting that those CEO's who identified talent as their number one differentiator…their organization's seem to outperform on average those organizations where the CEO did not identify people as their number one differentiator. It's interesting to note that empirically there have been many outstanding studies (e.g., Boston Consulting Group, PwC, Hackett group, Hay Group, and my own

company) that clearly identify the powerful predictive relationships between an organization's talent management practices and operating results. The problem has been that nobody has offered a roadmap and model to help organization's "connect the dots" to driving superior operating results by strengthening their talent management practices.

In Talent Leadership I provide that roadmap and model. I call it my "Stealth Fighter" Model, since it resembles a stealth fighter airplane. The "Stealth Fighter" Model provides a clear roadmap to helping organizations strengthen their talent management practices, thereby strengthening what I refer to as the "leading indicators" of driving breakthrough operating results: **leadership capability, commitment and alignment.**

You write about great leaders having a strong "inner-core" and "outer-core." What do you mean by this?

In order for leaders and future leaders to become the absolute best leaders they can be, they must possess a strong "inner core" and "outer core". Inner Core (IC) includes critical attributes such as self-image, character, values, beliefs, positive thinking, healthy emotions, and behavioral tendencies. Outer Core (OC) reflects those critical skills and competencies that all leaders must execute in order to be successful, such as: critical thinking, strategic thinking, decision making, change leadership, emotional leadership, team leadership, etc. A leader who has a strong IC has a much higher probability of possessing a strong OC. In fact, a strong IC will drive a strong OC. Great leaders—the best of the best—possess both a strong IC and OC. When I coach leaders and emerging leaders I work from the "inside-out", meaning I look for strengths and development needs initially in their IC. These attributes tend to be enduring and also most challenging to change, however, once addressed they become great leaders. There is a "bridge" that connects a leaders IC and OC—it is the bridge of possessing **executive maturity** *(i.e., learning agility, people agility, and mental agility) and* **versatility** *to be able to read situations and people correctly and then adjust their style and approach accordingly.*

You wrote a popular blog post recently about CEO succession and role boards play in responsibly preparing for and choosing new leaders. Why do so many fail to do their due diligence? What should organizations be doing to mitigate their risk?

Prescription before diagnosis is malpractice in medicine. In business, the principle seems to apply equally as well in the world of operating decisions such as divestiture, acquisition, capital expense, etc. However, when critical talent decisions need to be made—whether they involve CEO or senior executive succession or deciding who is a high-potential, many companies fail to apply this principle. It is my contention that in the world of talent and people decisions, that most organizations are not doing sufficient "due diligence" and are, in fact, engaged in malpractice. At the root of the issue is the faulty belief that the best predictor of future performance is past performance. That is the issue.

In fact, the skills and competencies that may serve an executive well at their current level may not serve them well in their next role at the next level. Often, given the pace of change, there is little relationship that exists between the competencies and skills required for a leader to be successful in their next role as compared their current role. Marshall Goldsmith has written about this. "What Got You Here, Won't Get You There". Organization's that hold to this faulty belief end up making many succession and high-potential mistakes. There is an over-reliance on subjectivity, perception and "hear-say" and my own research has proven this. Clearly, organizations need to become much more passionate and diligent in the use of assessments that measure a leader's or future leader's **capability**, **commitment**, *and* **alignment** *to excel in their next role.*

You end your book with what you call your "Twenty 2020" Concept....can you explain?

Based on my continuing research, these are the 20 definitive leadership development and talent management practices any organization needs to implement and execute **now** *in order to successfully mitigate operating risk and ensure its viability and survival through the year 2020 and beyond. For example, here are three:*

- *Promote leaders and identify future leaders and position them in the leadership pipeline based upon the relevant competencies required for success.*

- *Identify at least two candidates who are "ready now" and two "future" candidates for each mission—critical role throughout the organization.*

- *Promote "top shelf" executive talent which is vetted using multi-method executive assessment.*