



## Four ways to build and develop effective integration leaders

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In the previous article in our M&A Integration Series - [Four things successful leader do during mergers and acquisitions](#) - we shared insights from a recent study in which we identified what successful integration leaders do differently. We found the most effective leaders are those who inspire and motivate people, are capable of handling crisis, promote change and see it as a pathway to growth.

Now that we've established a profile for what it takes to successfully lead an M&A, how can you use these findings to identify and cultivate leaders within your organization?

Here are four things you can do:

1. Choose the right leaders: There will be times you won't have the choice of who will lead an integration. But when you do, you'll want to look for leaders who exhibit the behaviors we've outlined in our profile. This means you'll need to evaluate each leader's ability to set and maintain direction, to be proactive about change, to keep calm and make decisions in a time of crisis and spot opportunities to challenge the status quo.

There are several methods to evaluate behavior—interviews, reviews of past

performance (for internal candidates) and assessment tools such as psychometrics can be especially helpful when it comes to gaining insight into the strengths each leader brings to the table, along with the areas that might need further development, all of which you'll need to weigh before choosing the right people.

2. Coach your team: If you already have an integration team in place, share this framework so team members know what behaviors are most effective. Doing so will not only help set expectations that you need your leaders to be inspirers, change agents, crisis handlers and growth seekers, but also will help you identify areas that need further development so you can provide support to help bring leaders along in their roles.

3. Monitor future leadership pipelines: Some organizations use the integration leader role as a stretch opportunity for leaders coming up through the ranks. If that's your organization's approach, consider measuring and tracking future leaders against our framework. Doing so will help reduce risk (using integration management roles as a means to develop relatively inexperienced leaders can be high risk), and it will give you a chance to spot where these leaders need development so you can provide support before they come into the integration role.

4: Build new leadership teams: New leadership teams are part and parcel of the M&A environment. Working with teams in their early development to build group self-awareness and an understanding of strengths and challenges in relation to the characteristics we know are successful will help teams reach peak performance.

Final thoughts: Bringing different organizations together is no easy task and requires the right kind of leadership. With a framework that outlines the behaviors of those who do the job most effectively, organizations will have a guide to identifying and developing the right talent to lead the charge.

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About the Study: Willis Towers Watson, in collaboration with our M&A clients, undertook a study to shed light on the profile of a successful integration leader. Leveraging our Wave Professional Styles questionnaire, we asked business integration leaders to describe their preferred styles of leading. We also asked them to tell us if they initiated an array of change management activities known to enhance people integration. Concurrently, we asked HR and corporate development leaders their views on what a successful leader looks like through the

lens of people integration. Finally, for a subset of leaders, we gathered ratings on the leaders' impact on financial, people and project management goals. If you would like further information on Wave, or would like to trial the tool, please contact [info@savilleassessment.com](mailto:info@savilleassessment.com)

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