

Oracle's Ellison and Genghis Khan

Oracle founder and chief executive Larry Ellison is a classic narcissistic leader, reminiscent of both the robber barons of the 19th century, who created industries in their own image, and Genghis Khan, who said: "It is not sufficient that I succeed. Everyone else must fail."

What lessons can you take from a narcissist who sweeps high-level staff members and competitors alike out of his path?

- 1. Don't expect any sensitivity.** To a consultant proposing a change in the Oracle logo, Ellison said after two seconds, "Don't f*** with my logo." End of presentation. At a dinner in Maui for top salespeople, the legal counsel from Europe had flown in with his wife. "I'm not sitting with ... lawyers at my table," Ellison told them.
- 2. While they can be incredibly** corrosive, narcissistic leaders also can be powerfully productive. If you agree with the mission and stay out of their way, you may prosper. They reward loyalty.
- 3. They may be visionaries,** but they're terrible at building relationships and executing business. If you excel in either area, you may find a role.
- 4. They will go first.** Ellison built the first relational database in 1979. In the mid-1990s, he foresaw by 10 years the rise of networks. "I always feel good when everyone says I'm nuts," he says. "It's a sign we've done something new."
- 5. Narcissistic leaders** see no boundaries. Once, Oracle needed to connect some terminals to the room next door but nobody could figure out how to run the wiring. Ellison picked up a hammer and smashed through the wall.
- 6. They can't coexist** peacefully with competitors. Ellison remembers defending free markets to a Japanese business leader in the early 1980s. "In Japan, we believe our competitors are stealing the rice out of the mouths of our children," the executive replied. "In Japan, we think anything less than 100 percent market share is not enough." Ellison got the message.
- 7. Narcissistic leaders** can be utterly convincing because they believe in their vision.

— Adapted from *Everyone Else Must Fail*, Karen Southwick, Crown Business.