

A CEO bets on attitude, not expertise



Ed Clark knows the drill: When you're a powerful CEO, you can scream at people to convey your displeasure. Then they will fall into line.

But Clark rejects that approach. The longtime leader of TD Bank Group, a Canada-based financial giant, spent his career challenging the image of the loud, take-charge CEO.

"There are too many leaders who think their job is to yell at people," he says. "I don't follow that model."

Clark, who retired in 2014, credits his success with his ability to listen. He notes that many young go-getters assume that they need to make their presence known by taking charge vocally. But true leadership, he argues, flows from attentiveness, observation and a commitment to continual learning.

Throughout his career, Clark didn't necessarily hire credentialed experts with narrow expertise in some aspect of banking. Depending on the job, he often preferred to recruit bright individuals with the right attitude.

"Bring us well educated who can read, write and do arithmetic, and we'll teach them banking," he says. "It's not that complicated."

Because he attributes his own career success to others who challenged him with tough assignments, he likes to delegate tasks to employees who may not possess all the ideal qualifications.

"Someone was always betting on me, ridiculously, and it turns out I was able to do it," he says.

While the most dynamic communicators tend to exert the greatest influence, Clark has a soft spot for quiet personalities who struggle to stand out. He has found that "inarticulate" staffers can prove highly intelligent and make significant contributions, as long as they're listened to.

— Adapted from ["What TD Bank's Ed Clark learned on the job,"](#) Leah Eichler, www.theglobeandmail.com.