

Behold GE's 5 growth-leadership traits

For a while now, General Electric's top dogs have been studying companies they admire, like Dell and Toyota, seeing how they do things and trying to figure out exactly what propels them to the leading edge.

The GE group settled on five "growth leadership traits" common to all of those top companies ... and copied them, of course.

Here they are:

1. **Focusing outward, on its customers.** *Example:* GE helped one of its clients in Illinois figure out how to improve its coal-distribution process, saving that company millions of dollars.
2. **Showing expertise.** Since most of GE's global sales force has been with the company for less than five years, training and retention will be key to bringing everybody up to speed.
3. **Practicing inclusive leadership.** Damian Thomas, general manager of corporate sales, has begun gathering midlevel GE managers of every ilk for a sales leadership confab.
4. **Thinking clearly.** Under Jack Welch, GE excelled operationally, financially and on the human resources side. New CEO Jeff Immelt has added a commercial focus on innovation and market responsiveness.
5. **Taking risks.** GE is staking its future on growing internally, instead of through acquisition, by introducing new products, adding new customers and solving more problems for the customers it already has. Immelt aims to grow organic revenue by 8 percent a year.

—Adapted from "Going for the Green," Julia Chang, *Sales & Marketing Management*.