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ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES IN  
THE 21st CENTURY:  
AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT

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## **ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY: AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this article is to present the key entrepreneurial leadership competencies which CEOs need in order to play their entrepreneurial roles optimally. Despite the instrumental role played by entrepreneurial leadership in development process and the potential entrepreneurial leadership hold in enhancing firm performance, little research work has been done to identify the entrepreneurial leadership competencies and understand the ways and strategies through which they are acquired and developed in Kenyan context. The study used a mixed methods research design which combined three different data collection methods to generate rich primary data, which were then subjected to both quantitative and qualitative analysis. This study used primary data obtained from CEOs of mid-sized companies and entrepreneurial leadership experts through a survey, case studies and Delphi methods. The combination of these methods was intended to help improve the validity of results and also allow for complementarity in data collection for the purposes of attaining high levels of completeness. The research established that the top entrepreneurial leadership competencies are: Innovativeness; proactiveness; being decisive; adaptability and flexibility; foresight; risk taking; being ambitious and performance oriented; ability to identify and articulate a vision; ethics and integrity; being informed; positive; effective bargainer; having intellectual versatility; emotional intelligence and personal mastery; being improvement oriented and organizational savvy. Others included being independent, being intellectually stimulating, being diplomatic and having global mindset. The study concludes with a call for scholars and experts in the area of entrepreneurship to continuously re-examine the leadership competencies required for success in the dynamic, complex and uncertain competitive business landscape- largely because competencies are context specific. This will help to update the key competencies in tandem with the emerging challenges and therefore effectively guide the process of entrepreneurial leadership development especially in regard to necessary competencies to be nurtured and the methods and strategies to achieve that. There is need for sustained investment in research on entrepreneurial leadership competencies as this will provide a framework to state and non-state actors involved in promoting entrepreneurial leadership development among the citizenship.

**Key words:** Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial leadership competencies, Delphi

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## Introduction

The article addresses a research objective which is to establish the key entrepreneurial leadership competences which CEOs need in various roles to be efficient in Kenya. Entrepreneurial activities have contributed to the growth of the economy of many states. The importance of entrepreneurial leadership especially in African economies cannot be overemphasized. Entrepreneurship contributes to national development in multiple ways such as converting innovative ideas into development opportunities; it is the basis for competitiveness especially through the revitalization of social and productive networks; it is a source of new employment; and as a way to increase productivity and economic growth (Raposo et al, 2011; Szirmai et al, 2011). As such, the supply of entrepreneurial leaders and development of their entrepreneurial leadership competencies is very important in enhancing economic development.

It follows, therefore, that identification of competencies that characterize successful entrepreneurial leaders, how these competencies are acquired, nurtured and developed, is very critical. If we fully appreciate the role of entrepreneurial leaders, we could focus more on bolstering their capabilities. Such an understanding would compel us to advise government and other development actors on appropriate efforts and strategies of inculcating entrepreneurial leadership in society in order to improve entrepreneurship skills in the society, thus promoting sustainable development ethos and competitiveness in our economy.

## Study Methodology

The methodology defines what the research activity is, how to proceed, how to measure progress, and what constitutes success. A study methodology can therefore be seen as a way to systematically solve the research problem; it can be understood as a science of investigating how research is done (Creswell, 2003; Singleton et al, 1988).

This study used primary data elicited from Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of mid-sized companies and entrepreneurial leadership experts through a survey, case studies and the Delphi method. This was intended to help improve the validity of results and allow for complementarity in data collection for purposes of attaining high levels of completeness. As a result, three research data collection methods that were adopted and their attendant three levels of collection; the study involved three levels of data analysis.

This study deployed both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The qualitative approach was used to obtain in-depth information from purposively selected CEOs. This approach is suited to entrepreneurial leadership development research at a paradigmatic and methodological level. Even if there has been an explosion of use of qualitative research in the social sciences, this cannot be said to be the case in entrepreneurship research (Hindle, 2004). This position can also be related to entrepreneurial leadership, which is an emerging area of research. Qualitative research emphasizes and interpretive perspectives where one can borrow from different disciplines. Entrepreneurial leadership development is a dynamic and evolving area of research

and it therefore requires an interpretive inquiry. The aim of interpretive research is to reveal the depth and emerging issues in

the area of entrepreneurial leadership development process. Table 1 summarizes the methodology adopted by this study.

**Table 1: Summary of the Study Methodology**

	<b>Study method</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Targeted sample</b>	<b>Actual Sample</b>	<b>Tools for Data Collection</b>	<b>Time for Data Collection</b>
1.	Delphi	Experts	20	19	Experts' Questionnaire	Sept – Oct 2013
2.	Survey	CEOs	100	105	CEOs' Questionnaire	Nov. 2013 - Sept 2014
3.	Case Studies	CEOs	10	10	Interview guide	August – Sept 2014

*Source: Author conceptualization (2018)*

Quantitative tools were used to collect and analyze quantitative data. Quantitative research deals with the measurement of quantity or amount. It is normally applicable to phenomena of which data can be presented in numerical terms. Experts Survey (quantitative), CEOs Survey (quantitative) and a set of ten Case Studies (qualitative) were conducted. Experts' survey was used to generate general information about entrepreneurial leadership development. This information was built on and validated through CEOs survey and case studies.

### **Literature Review**

Competencies have been defined and conceptualized differently by different authors. Boyatzis (1982) defined a job competency as an underlying characteristic of a person which results in effective and/or superior performance in a job. An underlying characteristic can be a motive, trait, skill, and aspect of one's self –image, social role or a body of knowledge. The possession of these characteristic may or may not be known to the person (Boyatzi's 1982). Spencer and Spencer (1993)

understood competencies as underlying characteristics of people and indicate ways of behaving or thinking in different situations. According to Spencer and Spencer (1993), there are five types of competency characteristics: motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge and skill. Quinn et al (1994) argued that a competency suggests both the possession of knowledge and the behaviour capacity to act appropriately. As such, in order to develop competencies, a person must be both introduced to knowledge and have the opportunity to practice the skills. Byne and Rees (2006) define leadership competencies as the integration of practical, social and analytical skills, necessary to perform designated job responsibilities according to organizational and individual job performance standards.

Byrne and Rees (2006) argue that competence in the output of a learning process and that some of the competences can be unconscious in that a person does not necessary always know that he/she possess a certain competence. A competence is seen as an ability to act and

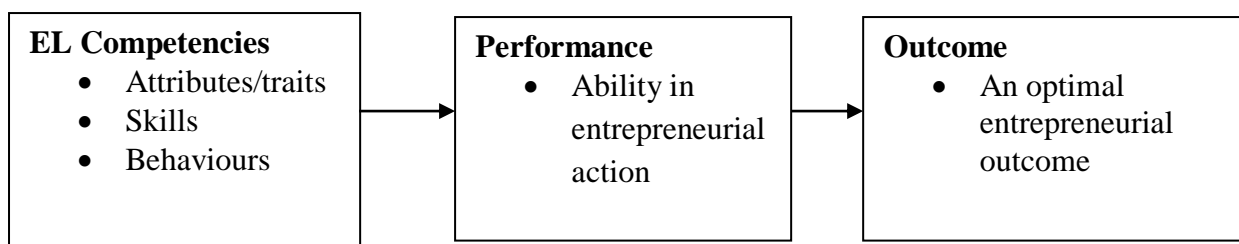


apply knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences. A good competence leads to high performance which leads to excellent outcomes. Competence is therefore seen in relation to output.

Competence is also defined as “an underlying characteristic of a person which results in effective and/or superior performance on the job (Klemp, 1980). It is also defined as “a cluster of related knowledge, skills, and attitudes that reflects a major portion of one's job (a role or responsibility), that correlates with performance on the job, that can be measured with well accepted standards, and that can be improved with training and development” (Parry, 1996). Man & Lau (2000) and Bird (1995) argued that a competency can be considered as a kind of higher level characteristic, encompassing different personality traits, skills and knowledge which are, in turn, influenced by the entrepreneur’s experience, training, education, family background and other demographical variables. Competencies

can also be thought of as the state or quality of being well qualified to perform a task. McClelland (1973) argued that competencies can be used in predicting job performances. He further said that competencies were not biased by race, gender or socio economic factors. His study helped to identify performance aspects which are not attributable to a worker’s intelligence or degree of knowledge and skill. Entrepreneurial competencies are defined as underlying characteristics possessed by a person which result in new venture creation, survival, and/or growth (Bird, 1995).

In this study, entrepreneurial leadership competencies will be understood to consist of attributes/traits, skills, and behaviours that facilitate optimal entrepreneurial performance. Entrepreneurial leadership competencies are manifested through concrete entrepreneurial actions. Figure 1 illustrates the definition of entrepreneurial leadership competencies.



*Figure 1: The illustration of entrepreneurial leadership competencies definition*

There have been attempts by scholars to categorize leadership competencies. Schein (1978) came up with three types of competencies which an effective leader requires. These include analytic competence (the ability to identify, analyze and solve problems under conditions of incomplete information and

uncertainty and liking of such problem solving situations), interpersonal competence (the ability to influence, supervise, lead, manipulate and control people at all levels of the organization toward the more effective achievement of organizational goals) and emotional competence (the capacity to be stimulated

by emotional and interpersonal crisis rather than being exhausted or debilitated and also the capacity to bear high level responsibility without becoming paralyzed and the ability to exercise power without guilt or shame).

Bryne and Ree (2006) also identify three types of leadership competencies to include practical competencies (focused primarily on the technical aspects of one’s leadership responsibilities); social competencies (focused primarily on the interpersonal aspects of one’s leadership responsibilities) ; and analytical competencies –(primarily and critical thinking aspects of one’s leadership responsibilities).

Gupta et al. (2004) suggest that entrepreneurial leaders face two main challenges in their entrepreneurial endeavours. First challenge is in envisaging and creating a scenario of possible opportunities that can be exploited to revolutionize the current transaction set, taking into consideration firm’s limited resources (scenario enactment). The second challenge involves convincing potential followers and the firm’s network of stakeholders that the

transformation of this transaction set is possible by assembling resources to accomplish the objectives underlying the scenario (cast enactment). Cast enactment involves ‘creating a cast of characters— people endowed with the appropriate resources needed to execute the transformation’ (Gupta et al. 2004).

According to Gupta et al. (2004) the processes of scenario enactment and cast enactment evolve ‘cumulatively and iteratively’. Gupta et al. (2004) observes that entrepreneurial leader actions in pursuing their vision ‘constitute proactive enactment of new combinations of capabilities in the organization-reconfigured and focused to forge an entirely reconstructed transaction set for the firm’. Gupta et al. (2004) borrowing from McGrath and MacMillan (2000) suggest five specific entrepreneurial leadership roles. Three of these roles (framing the challenge, absorbing uncertainty and path clearing) are associated with scenario enactment and the other two roles (specifying the limit and building commitment) are linked to cast enactment. Table 2 summarizes these entrepreneurial leadership roles.

**Table 2: Entrepreneurial leadership roles and necessary competencies**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Necessary Competencies</b>
Scenario enactment	Framing the challenge (specifying highly challenging but realistic outcomes for the cast of actors to accomplish)	Performance orientation, Ambitious, Informed, Extra insight
	Absorbing uncertainty (taking the burden of responsibility for the future).	Visionary, Foresight, Confidence builder
	Path clearing (negotiating opposition and clearing the path for scenario enactment)	Diplomatic, Bargainer, Convincing, Encouraging
Cast	Building commitment (building an inspired	Inspirational, Enthusiastic,

enactment	common purpose).	Team builder, Improvement oriented
	Specifying limits (building a common understanding and agreement of what can and cannot be done)	Integrator, Intellectually stimulating, Positive, Decisive

**Source: Adapted from Gupta et al. 2004**

Leadership competencies including leader's attributes/traits, skills and behaviours are therefore core dimensions of leadership development activities and programmes. Hernez-Broome and Hughes suggest that leadership competencies need to correspond to the organization's particular strategy and business model and specific to the unique business challenges and goals. Barret and Beeson (2002) argue that leadership competencies will keep changing as the competitive business environment changes. They argue that five critical forces will shape leadership competencies requirements in future. These forces include global competition, information technology, and the need for rapid and flexible organizations, teams and differing employee needs. As such, the 'lone ranger' type of leader will increasingly become irrelevant and the successful leader will be one who can motivate and coordinate a team-based approach in an environment with greater ambiguity and uncertainty (Herney and Hughes, 2005). Barret and Beeson (2002) suggested that a business leader must be a master strategist, change manager, relationship/network builder and talent developer in order to effectively deal with future business challenges.

Leadership development currently also needs to include substantial components involving international markets and world economic trends. The world is globalized

and interconnected and business leaders therefore need to be well versed with doing business internationally and conceiving strategies on international basis. Entrepreneurs must be upto date with international trends that are survival and better performance of their firms (Tarabishy, 2005; Kuratko, 2007).

The world is currently witnessing technological revolution of unprecedented scale which has significantly altered organizational life. This has profound implications for organizational leadership; as leaders increasingly need to demonstrate technological savvy. Virtual leadership is already a reality. Need to lead geographically dispersed units and teams, is on the rise where technology will come in handy (Kuratko, 2007). Marguardt et al. (2000) identified the following competencies for 21<sup>st</sup> century global leader: global mindset; teacher, coach, mentor and model learner; servant and steward; system thinker and polychromic coordination; concern for ethic; technologists; innovator and risk taker and visionary and vision builder.

Ethical side of enterprise has increasingly gained currency in the entrepreneurial leadership discourse. This has been necessitated by the scandals of unprecedented magnitude that have rocked the business arena in the recent past (Kuratko, 2007). The study on entrepreneurial ethics has been evolving

and now appears more relevant than ever before. Kuratko (2007) argues that ethics present a complex challenge for entrepreneurial leaders as they have to display honesty, integrity and ethics in all their decisions and that their behaviour serves as a model for all other employees to follow. The ethical influence of the owner in an entrepreneurial venture is more felt and powerful than in larger corporations where the influence is diluted through layers of management (Kuratko, 2007). It is therefore important for entrepreneurial leaders to learn to become more ethical and inculcate ethical standards in his or her firm. Leader's moral character, his concern for others, and congruence of ethical values with action are key to his credibility and trustworthiness. Ethical entrepreneurial leadership development is vital-yet-elusive concept that requires more scholarly attention.

Entrepreneurial leadership also has its 'dark/negative side' which entrepreneurial leaders must learn to handle or ensure that they don't fall prey to. Kurakto (2007) argue that this destructive element of entrepreneurial leadership resides within the energetic drive of top performing entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial activity entails risk, which include financial, career, family and social and psychic risk. The manner in which entrepreneurs handle risk has potential shortcomings which must be carefully evaluated. Entrepreneurial stress is another potentially negative aspect of entrepreneurial leadership. Entrepreneurship requires a substantial commitment of time and energy at the expense of family and social activities. Entrepreneurial stress is a "function of

discrepancies between entrepreneur's expectations and ability to meet demands, as well as discrepancies between the individual's expectations and personality" (Kuratko, 2007). Entrepreneurs are self-driven people who are willing to tolerate stress and its side effects in order to achieve their entrepreneurial goals.

Kuratko and Hodgets (2007) identify entrepreneurial ego as another negative component of entrepreneurial leadership. They argue that an entrepreneurial leader may experience the negative effects of inflated ego including 'overbearing need for control, a sense of distrust, and overriding desire for success, or unrealistic optimism'.

As part of entrepreneurial leadership competencies development and learning processes, the entrepreneurial leaders must learn and increasingly deal with these potentially destructive elements residing within their energetic drive for entrepreneurial success. This study will therefore also investigate mechanisms and strategies of dealing with these destructive elements in the process of entrepreneurial leadership competencies development.

### **Expert Ranking of Entrepreneurial Leadership Competencies**

In round one of the Delphi survey, nineteen experts participated in ranking 33 competencies in order of importance. The 33 competencies were compiled after extensive literature review. The findings from Round 1 are summarized in Table 3, which show the ranking of entrepreneurial leadership competencies as rated by the experts. The competencies that were rated as most important for CEOs in Kenya were innovativeness, proactiveness, risk taking, positive and identifying and articulating a



vision. Others include being decisive, having foresight, being of high integrity, being ambitious and performance oriented and being improvement oriented.

**Table 3: Round one ranking of the competencies related to entrepreneurial performance (%)**

	<b>Competencies</b>	<b>Greatly Inhibits</b>	<b>Somewhat Inhibits</b>	<b>Slightly Inhibits</b>	<b>Has No Impact</b>	<b>Contributes Slightly</b>	<b>Contributes Somewhat</b>	<b>Contributes Greatly</b>
1	Innovativeness						26	74
2	Proactiveness					5	26	68
3	Risk Taking					11	21	68
4	Positive			5		11	16	68
5	Identifying and Articulating a Vision				5	5	26	64
6	Decisive		5			5	26	64
7	Foresight				5		16	63
8	Ethics and Integrity		5			16	16	63
9	Ambitious and Performance Oriented					5	36	58
10	Improvement Oriented					11	31	58
11	Informed					16	26	58
12	Adaptability and Flexibility					5	42	53
13	Effective Bargainer					5	42	53
14	Independent					11	37	53
15	Intellectual Versatility			5		21	21	53
16	Organizational Savvy			5		26	16	53
17	Convincing			5	5	16	26	48
18	Intellectually Stimulating			5		16	32	48
19	Personal Mastery				5	21	32	42
20	Enthusiastic					36	21	42

21	Emotional Intelligence				5	21	37	36
22	Diplomatic		5		5	16	37	36
23	Global Mindset		5		11	31	16	36
24	Inspirational					11	58	32
25	Encouraging			5		26	36	32
26	Integrator			5	5	21	36	32
27	Providing an Appropriate Model				5	32	32	32
28	Confidence Builder				5	21	48	26
29	Internal Locus of Control		11	11	5	26	21	26
30	Cognitive Ability				5	36	36	21
31	Intuitive				16	26	36	21
32	Providing Individualized Support			11	16	32	32	11
33	Tolerance of Ambiguity		5	5	26	32	26	5

*Source: Delphi Data, 2014*

After the analysis of round one, the researchers did two things, guided by the results of the analysis and advice from the experts. First, to avoid redundancy and repetition, we combined the competencies that were similar or meant almost the same thing. These include identifying and articulating a vision and convincing, positive and enthusiastic, and emotional

intelligence and personal mastery. As a result, the number of listed competencies declined from 33 to 20. Secondly, I ranked the competencies from the one rated highest to the lowest. I chose the top twenty (20) rated competencies to include in the second round of experts survey as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Twenty best rated competencies from Round 1 of experts' survey.**

	<b>Competencies</b>	<b>Description of the competencies</b>
1	Innovativeness	Ability and tendency to think creatively, develop novel and useful ideas in entrepreneurial opportunity recognition, resource utilization and problem solving
2	Proactiveness	Ability to anticipate future problems, necessity for change and progress; aggressive competitive behaviour directed at rival firms and the organizational pursuit of favourable business opportunities
3	Risk taking	Willingness to absorb uncertainty and take the burden of responsibility in future
4	Positive/ Enthusiastic	Generally optimistic and confident; demonstrates and imparts strong positive emotions for work
5	Identifying and articulating a vision/ Convincing	Looking for new opportunities; projecting a vision; provide directions; inspiring others behind the vision; able to persuade others of his/her viewpoint
6	Foresight	Anticipates possible future events
7	Ethics and integrity	Leader's moral character, his concern for others, and congruence of ethical values with action; credibility and trustworthiness
8	Ambitious and Performance-oriented	Sets high performance goals and articulating high performance expectations, expecting top performance
9	Improvement-oriented	Seeks continuous performance improvement
10	Informed	Knowledgeable; aware of information
11	Decisive	Makes decisions firmly and quickly
12	Adaptability and Flexibility	Handles day-to-day work challenges confidently; Adjusts to multiple demands, shifting priorities, ambiguity, and rapid change; Shows resilience in the face of constraints, frustrations, or adversity
13	Effective bargainer	Is able to negotiate effectively, able to make transactions with others on favorable terms
14	Independent	Personal drive

15	Intellectual Versatility	Recognizes, explores, and uses a broad range of ideas and practices; Thinks logically and creatively without undue influence from personal biases
16	Organizational Savvy	Develops effective give-and-take relationships with others; Understands the agendas and perspectives of others; Recognizes and effectively balances the interests and needs of one's own group with those of the broader organization; Knows which battles to fight
17	Intellectually stimulating	Encourages others to think and use their minds, think differently; challenges beliefs, stereotypes and attitudes of others; looking at old problems in new ways
18	Emotional intelligence and Personal Mastery	Ability to connect effectively with people; continuous improvement guided by key principles like vision, personal purpose, creative tension, and understanding the subconscious mind.
19	Diplomatic	Skilled at interpersonal relations, tactful
20	Global mindset	Sensitiveness to cultural differences, culturally adventurous, flexible; global perspectives

*Source: Delphi Data, 2014*

These competences were circulated to the experts for second round of ranking. Table 5 shows the ranking of entrepreneurial competencies by the experts in round two of the Delphi survey.

**Table 5: Frequency Distributions for Competencies Ranking (%)**

	Competencies	Greatly Inhibits	Somewhat Inhibits	Slightly Inhibits	Contributes Slightly	Contributes Somewhat	Contributes Greatly
1	Innovativeness					11	89
2	Decisive					16	84
3	Positive/Enthusiastic				5	11	84
4	Pro-activeness					21	79

5	Risk Taking				5	21	74
6	Ambitious and Performance Oriented					32	68
7	Informed					32	68
8	Ethics and Integrity				16	16	68
9	Improvement Oriented				5	32	63
10	EI and Personal Mastery				5	32	63
11	Adaptability and flexibility					42	58
12	Identifying and Articulating a vision /convincing				5	37	58
13	Foresight				16	26	58
14	Intellectual Versatility				11	33	56
15	Effective Bargainer					47	53
16	Independent					47	53
17	Organizational Savvy				16	37	47
18	Diplomatic				21	32	47
19	Global mindset				16	42	42
20	Intellectually Stimulating				26	37	37

**Source: Delphi Data 2014**

As outlined in Table 5, we were able to obtain and rank the top twenty competencies required by the CEOs of successful mid-sized firms in Kenya. No expert stated that any of the named competencies inhibit in any way entrepreneurial performance. The most highly ranked entrepreneurial leadership competencies include being innovative, decisive, positive and enthusiastic, proactive, risk taker, ambitious and performance oriented, being informed, ethical and of high integrity, improvements oriented and having personal mastery and emotional intelligence.

Others entrepreneurial leadership competencies include being flexible,

having foresight, being intellectually versatile, being an effective bargainer, being independent, being organizational savvy, being diplomatic and having global mindset and also being intellectually stimulating. After establishing the top twenty entrepreneurial leadership competencies through Delphi method, the researcher embarked validating the same through a survey of top CEOs. The next section presents the findings.

**CEO Ranking of Entrepreneurial Leadership Competencies**

CEOs were asked to give their views on the extent to which they thought the highlighted entrepreneurial leadership competencies were important. There was overall agreement level on the importance

of various competencies as they were rated between 89% and 98%. Thus a consensus achieved on how these competencies were important with all votes scoring 85% and above. This was achieved by ranking entrepreneurs' views about the importance based on very important, important, somehow important, less important and least important on a scale of 1-5. Innovativeness and risk taking were ranked as the most important competencies at 98% followed by positive/enthusiastic, ambitious and performance oriented, adaptability and flexibility all scoring 97%, pro-activeness, foresight, improvement-oriented and informed scoring 96% , identify and articulating a vision/ convincing and decisive at 95% , ethics and integrity at 93%, intellectual versatility, intellectually stimulating, emotional intelligence and personal mastery at 92%, effective bargainer, diplomatic, and global mindset at 91%.

The study also sought to understand the extent to which CEOs believed that they possessed various leadership competencies. Through self-ranking, most CEOs rated themselves as ambitious and

performance oriented, ranking highest at 93%; followed by being innovative, positive/enthusiastic, pro-active; informed; being ethical and of high integrity at 87%; being decisive 86%; having foresight at 84%; being improvement oriented and having ability to identify and articulate a vision/convincing at 83%; being a risk taker 82%; intellectual versatility 81%, being independent and organizational savvy 80%; adaptability and flexibility 79%; being an effective bargainer 76% and having emotional intelligence and personal mastery at 74%.

The results of self-ranking indicated that the CEOs themselves are conscious of their extent of competencies' gaps that they need to work towards improving. This is likely to lead to deliberate efforts to bridge those gaps. Entrepreneurial leadership competencies gap is a shortfall between current and forecasted leadership capabilities. Self-ranking can be used as one of the strategies and indicator of this gap. Table 6 shows the extent to which CEOs think they possess various leadership competencies.



**Table 6: Extent to which CEOs possess entrepreneurial leadership competencies**

	Very high	High	Not sure	Low	Very low
Innovativeness	58	29	10	1	3
Decisive	52	34	10	1	3
Positive /Enthusiastic	58	29	9	2	3
Proactiveness	47	40	10	3	1
Risk taking	57	25	13	2	3
Ambitious and performance oriented	50	43	4	0	3
Informed	52	35	9	1	3
Ethics and integrity	57	30	7	2	4
Improvement oriented	43	40	13	0	4
EI and personal mastery	34	40	17	5	4
Adaptability and flexibility	46	33	16	1	4
Identify and articulate a vision/convincing	55	28	10	5	2
Foresight	50	34	10	4	2
Intellectual versatility	50	31	12	4	3
Effective bargainer	47	29	15	7	3
Independent	55	25	10	4	7
Organizational	47	33	11	7	2
Diplomatic	43	32	11	10	3
Intellectually stimulating	42	33	14	8	3
Global mindset	46	33	11	6	4

*Source: CEO Survey 2014*

Table 7 compares the importance of various competencies and the extent to which CEOs possess them.

**Table 7: Comparison of competencies importance and the extent to which CEO possess them**

	Entrepreneurial Leadership competencies	Importance (%)	Possession (%)
1	Innovativeness	97%	87%
2	Proactiveness	95%	87%
3	Decisive	92%	87%
4	Adaptability and flexibility	91%	79%
5	Foresight	90%	85%
6	Risk taking	88%	82%
7	Ambitious and performance oriented	87%	93%
8	Identify and articulate a vision/ convincing	86%	83%

9	Ethics and integrity	86%	88%
10	Informed	86%	88%
11	Positive /Enthusiastic	85%	87%
12	Effective bargainer	81%	75%
13	Intellectual versatility	81%	81%
14	Emotional intelligence and personal mastery	80%	74%
15	Improvement oriented	79%	83%
16	Organizational	79%	80%
17	Independent	74%	80%
18	Intellectually stimulating	74%	75%
19	Diplomatic	72%	75%
20	Global mindset	72%	79%

**Source: CEO Survey 2014**

As can be seen in Table 6, ranking of competencies by importance, range from 97% for importance of innovativeness to 72% for being diplomatic and having global mindset. The Table also shows that possession of these competencies range from a high of 97% for being ambitious and performance-oriented to a low of 74% for emotional intelligence and personal mastery. From the results, it is clear that majority of the CEOs in Kenya, need to invest in enhancing their entrepreneurial leadership competencies.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The aim of this article was to answer the question: What are the key entrepreneurial leadership competencies required by successful CEOs in Kenya? The article also interrogated the extent to which respondents think they possess the various leadership competencies and the relevance of the various entrepreneurial leadership development competencies.

The study established the top twenty entrepreneurial leadership competencies that are needed by a CEO to ensure optimal firm performance. The top competencies are: innovativeness;

proactiveness; being decisive; adaptability and flexibility; foresight; risk taking; being ambitious and performance oriented; ability to identify and articulate a vision/convincing; ethics and integrity; being informed; positive /enthusiastic; effective bargainer; having intellectual versatility; emotional intelligence and personal mastery; being improvement oriented and organizational savvy. Others included being independent, being intellectually stimulating, being diplomatic and having global mindset.

A thread emerged in which each of the top twenty competencies can be classified as either relationship-oriented or task-oriented competencies. The relationship-oriented competencies are being decisive; ability to identify and articulate a vision/convincing; positive/enthusiastic; effective bargainer; having ethics and integrity; emotional intelligence and personal mastery; being independent, being intellectually stimulating, being diplomatic and having global mindset. These are the competencies that help a CEO to engage with both internal and external publics of the firm to enhance

improved relations for optimal performance.

The second category of the competencies is task-oriented competencies. These competencies include: innovativeness; proactiveness; adaptability and flexibility; foresight; risk taking; being ambitious and performance oriented; being informed;

having intellectual versatility; being improvement-oriented and organizational savvy. The task-oriented competencies help the CEO to handle the technical aspects of running the firm. Figure 2 simplifies these two categories of entrepreneurial leadership competencies.

**Figure 2: Categories of entrepreneurial leadership competencies**



*Source: Author Conceptualization (2018)*

There is near consensus between Experts and the CEOs on the order of importance of the entrepreneurial leadership competencies. It also emerged that self-ranking on the extent to which CEOs possess a particular competence compared to what is required can expose the competence gap that can be addressed

through the specific methods and strategies of developing that particular competence. Entrepreneurial leadership competencies are shaped and determined by environmental factors which are in state of flux and include local and global competition, technological revolution, need for rapid and flexible organizations, nature of the followers, and variation in

employees' needs. It is clear that these competencies are context specific. This means that the competencies required to operate will keep changing depending on the change in the business environment. For firms in Africa and specifically Kenya to survive in today's global dynamic economy characterized by rapid change, uncertainty and competitiveness, they need to utilize and harness the competencies of their entrepreneurial leaders.

It therefore follows that identification of competencies that characterize successful entrepreneurial leaders (taking into consideration changing business environment), how these competencies are acquired, nurtured and developed is very important. If we can understand what makes entrepreneurial leaders tick and how they achieve that state, then we may be able to harness the entrepreneurial capabilities of individuals by advising them on how to become more entrepreneurial. The understanding will help to inform government and other development actors on strategies and ways of inculcating entrepreneurial leadership in the society thereby increasing the level of entrepreneurship in the society and its translation into sustainable development and competitiveness.

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