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Well-paid CEOs are mean? Bigger families produce better leaders?

The study of leadership is a murky science--one that all too often traffics in common-sense cliches and mind-numbingly obvious findings. Sometimes, the result is unintentionally funny, such as this report from the wise folks at Harvard, Rice and the University of Utah: Their paper finds [the more CEOs make, the meaner they are](#). (Is this business or the eighth grade?)

But all too often, you're left staring at the stack of management books in the airport or the leadership journal your boss wants you to read wondering how people get paid to write such dreck. Here at [PostLeadership](#), we aim to sort the bright ideas from the bromides in weekly posts that round up the latest smart ideas, thinkers, articles and books on leadership you should know.

For instance, there's [this one on grooming leaders](#) from Innosight's Scott Anthony. He writes that rather than stretching rising stars by giving them jobs handling more people, more money and more complexity--the norm in most organizations--you should think small instead. "Giving up-and-comers more responsibility helps them to refine skills they already have, when what they need to do is develop the capability to flexibly respond to unanticipated challenges," Anthony writes. What matters in today's world isn't really having the experience of running a \$10 billion business once you've run a \$1 billion one. Rather, leaders need to know how to tap new markets, test new business models, and make small but promising growth projects succeed.

Another smart article worth reading is this one over at Knowledge@Wharton [about Boston Philharmonic conductor Benjamin Zander](#). Though corporate cubicle dwellers and federal employees may beg to differ, orchestra musicians are apparently among the least satisfied workers, even more so than prison guards, according to a Harvard study Zander quotes. The command-and-control cultures of most orchestras, he says, means musicians are not even permitted to speak to the conductor unless they're asking a question. To try to change that mold, the impresario, who calls conducting "the last bastion of totalitarianism," offers up a more collaborative approach to leadership he's honed over the years, using a simple formula that includes making subtle changes, encouraging people about the possibilities of their jobs and leading with passion.

Still, I can't help but point to quirky studies on occasion like this one, which should make you value your brothers and sisters more. (The consultants over at **Green Peak Partners** [believe big families produce better leaders](#).) And I'll do my best to tell you what to stay away from, too. For instance, file this one under ironic book titles: The Financial Times' Stefan Stern writes that a

new book about how we learn more from our missteps than our successes is [a study in failure itself](#). Apparently *How They Blew It*, well, blows it, too.

Happy reading.

By Jena McGregor | July 12, 2010; 5:15pm ET