

## CEOWORLD Magazine

# What Do Companies Seek Most in a Senior Executive?

***New Global Survey Reveals Surprising Consistency Around the World,***  
By Christine Hayward, Executive Director of IIC Partners.

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Late last year, [IIC Partners](#), one of the top ten executive search organizations in the world, surveyed 1,270 senior-level executives from around the world. Most of the respondents were members of the C-suite and had direct responsibility or input into senior-level hiring decisions.

The goal of the survey was to identify the major themes and challenges that organizations face in building effective senior executive teams. We were particularly interested in noting differences by geography, industry and size of company.

Not surprisingly, the findings ranged from expected to notable, but all added to our understanding of what organizations most desire and struggle with as they build senior executive teams. Here are some of the highlights of the survey.



## What Do Hiring Decision Makers Want Most in a Senior Executive?

One of the most interesting findings of the survey surrounded the traits that are most in demand by hiring organizations. The number-one skill that companies and Boards of Directors seek in senior executives is the ability to motivate and lead others. By a margin of 3:1, 68 percent of top leaders said they preferred a senior executive who could motivate and inspire employees to perform, more than they desired an executive who consistently performed well; though, it is still a highly valued trait.

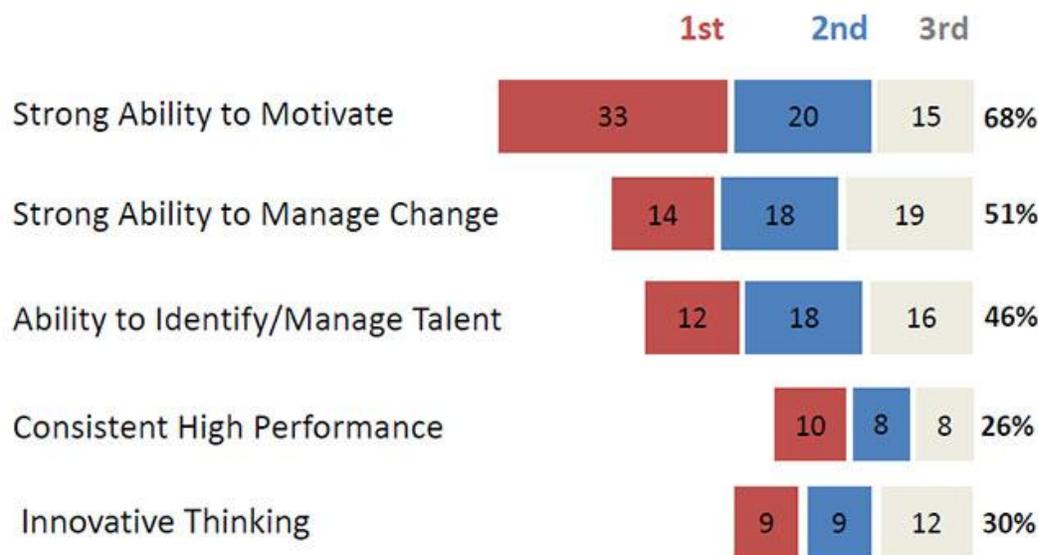
While the key to the corner office is still competency, hiring managers are no longer looking for a senior executive who is simply a talented practitioner, but one who excels at harnessing the power of others through leadership and inspiration.

Although motivational ability was far and beyond the number-one most sought quality in a senior executive, decision makers valued other traits as well:

- Strong ability to manage change (51 percent)
- Ability to identify and develop talent (46 percent)
- Innovative thinking (30 percent)
- Consistent high performance (26 percent)

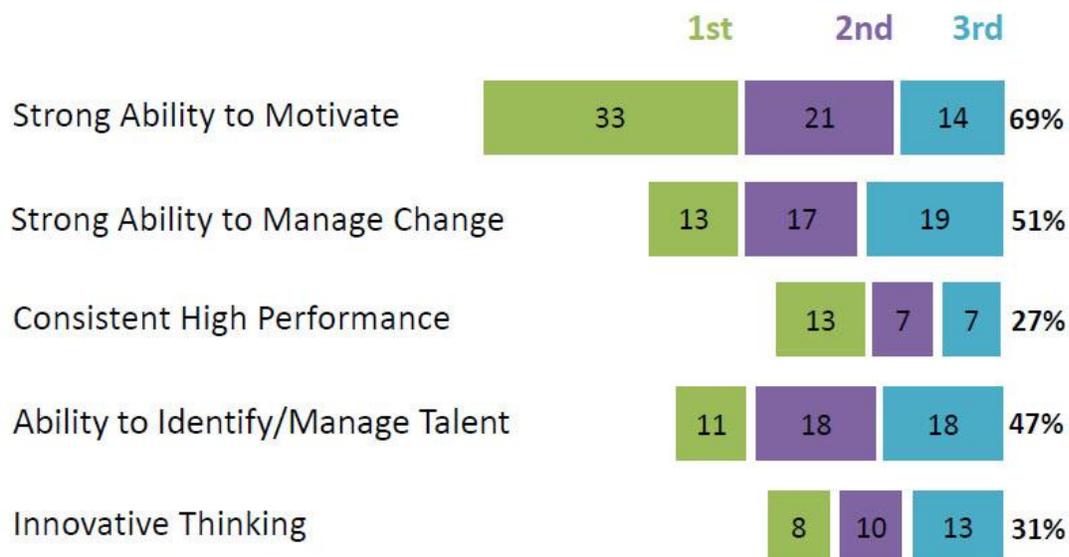
One of the most interesting findings was that the results varied very little around the globe. The ability of a leader to motivate and inspire was in strong demand worldwide. In the Americas, multiple languages and digital and online experience were the least sought-after attributes of a senior-level executive, though they ranked higher in other regions. The Asia-Pacific respondents ranked international experience as the sixth most important trait. Across all regions, managing change, identifying and developing talent and innovative thinking are seen as key attributes.

### TOP FIVE ATTRIBUTES OF A SENIOR-LEVEL EXECUTIVE



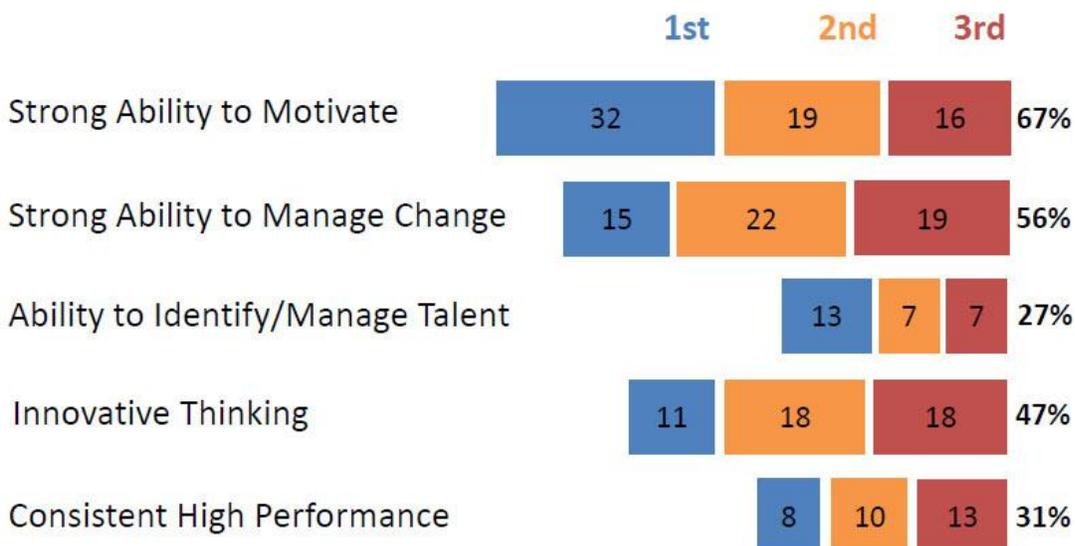
The most desirable attribute of a SLE is to motivate and inspire others.  
Ranked by top attribute and then by top 3 score

## AMERICAS - TOP FIVE ATTRIBUTES OF A SENIOR-LEVEL EXECUTIVE



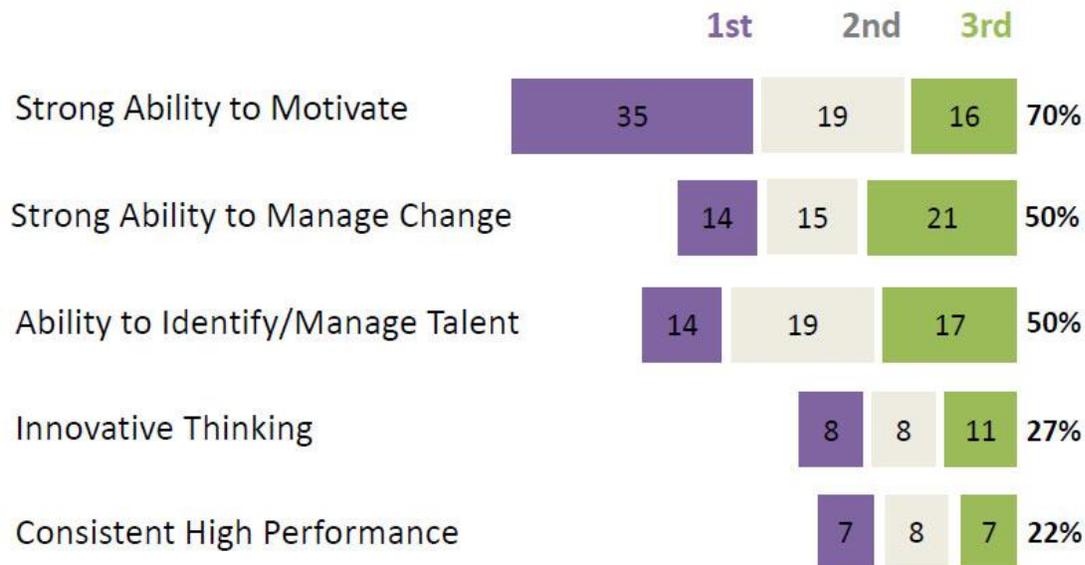
In the Americas region, multiple languages and digital and online experience were the least sought after attributes of a Senior Level Executive.

## EMEA - TOP FIVE ATTRIBUTES OF A SENIOR-LEVEL EXECUTIVE



Across all regions, managing change, identifying and developing talent and innovative thinking are also seen as key attributes.

## ASIA PAC - TOP FIVE ATTRIBUTES OF A SENIOR-LEVEL EXECUTIVE



In Asia Pac, survey respondents ranked "international experience" as #6.

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### About the Survey Respondents

The survey respondents came from 18 industry sectors ranging from manufacturing and financial services to mining and retail. Sixty-two percent of the respondents were at the C-suite or Managing Director level, with 520 from the Americas, 383 from EMEA and 347 from Asia-Pacific. Two-thirds of respondents have a Master's Degree or higher.

The survey, administered by Amárach Research of Dublin, Ireland, consisted of responses from executives at publicly held organizations (38 percent), privately held firms (43 percent), family-owned companies (8 percent), not-for-profits (5 percent) and other types of businesses (3 percent).

# IIC PARTNERS GLOBAL STUDY 2014

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Research by Amárach, Ireland  
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[Christine Hayward](#) is Executive Director of [IIC Partners](#), one of the top 10 executive search organizations in the world. The network of Independent International Consultants is made up of 40 independently owned and managed executive search firms representing 48 offices in 34 countries, all considered to be leaders in the geographic and industry markets they serve.