

A controversial CEO

The departure last month of Carly Fiorina, the charismatic CEO of Hewlett Packard, has divided many business analysts. Some analysts are positive about her time at HP. Others are more critical. Just what makes a good CEO?

1. Explain the difference between the following ways someone can leave their job.

to resign	to be laid off	to be fired	to stand down
to be sacked	to retire	to be dismissed	to step down

2. Complete the biography (a–d) of Carly Fiorina with information from the article below.

Business biography: Carly Fiorina			
1954	Born in Austin, Texas, USA	2000	Appointed (c) _____ of HP
1976	Graduated from Stanford University	2001	HP lays off 6,000 employees
1976-1996	Saleswoman and marketing executive at AT&T and (a) _____	(d) _____	Carly pushes through the merger between HP and Compaq
1998	Named as the most powerful woman executive in the US by (b) _____ magazine	2004	HP reports falling sales and increasing losses
July 1999	Became chief executive of Hewlett Packard	February 2005	Carly invited to step down by HP board

Farewell to Carly

Was she fired...or did she resign? The business press has described the departure of Hewlett Packard's charismatic CEO last month in a number of ways. She was effectively dismissed, or "invited to stand down". The press also speculated on the amount of her final severance pay, which is reputedly \$21.4 million!

Carly spent nearly 20 years at AT&T and Lucent Technologies, becoming known for her energetic style. Fame followed when Fortune magazine published its first ever ranking of the 50 most powerful women executives in the US, putting her at number one. She became a celebrity and one of the few business people identifiable by her first name: Carly.

In July 1999, Carly joined HP as chief executive, and was named chairman a year later. She was seen as the supreme example of a woman doing well in a male-dominated field. Women run just 14 of the 1,000 biggest publicly traded companies in the US, according to one research firm.

Carly was a controversial figure at HP, partly because of the abrasive manner in which the takeover of Compaq was fought. The merger was completed in 2002. Her admirers claim she revitalised HP through her leadership and vision. Her critics see her as arrogant and blame her for destroying the HP way – the famous "worker-centric" culture. Now, she has been removed. Does this prove that the bottom line for any CEO is to produce profits in an increasingly competitive marketplace?

3. Read the article again. What are the two opposing views about Carly Fiorina? What do *you* think about her?
4. Which of the following adjectives describing people's qualities as a leader are positive, and which are negative?

charismatic	energetic	controversial	arrogant	dynamic
abrasive	visionary	competitive	caring	motivating

5. Prepare a short biography of a business person you admire using some of the words below. Include a description of their qualities as a leader. Give your presentation to the class.

born	educated	graduated	appointed	promoted	became
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