Great by Choice

Developing Leaders

The End of Leadership
At Least as We Know It

Barbara Kellerman

“Leadership Excellence is an exceptional way to learn and then apply the best and latest ideas in the field of leadership.”

—Warren Bennis, author and USC professor of management
End of Dragonian Leadership

Imagine this creature is the last surviving leader, telling his tales to a wizard, the keeper of all knowledge. The leader spins out his stories, a millennium of adventures, triumphs and sorrows as the wizard dutifully and diligently records them.

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Service Excellence
Win by keeping out of the woods.

by Ken Shelton

W

hy do we publish Sales
and Service Excellence,
along with Personal and
Leadership Excellence each month and deliver
to all members?

These three magazines represent
the three primary domains of development—and
sales and service excellence constitutes the
essence of any great enterprise.

This truth was reinforced recently when
my wife Pam and I spent a three-day weekend
in Northern California, June 16-18.

Golf, Dining, Lodging Lessons

US Open. First stop was the
Olympia Golf Club for the US Open
where we saw Tiger fade from the
leader board by spending too much
time in the Woods. Announcer
Johnny Miller said that “the golf
course won” because most of the
eye leaders failed to adjust to the
subtle differences in course and
weather conditions (such as mois-
ture and wind), day by day, shot by shot.

No player finished under par.

• Leadership Lesson: The names and faces
atop your Leader Board in the early rounds
will likely change over time as the leaders
face new pressures and conditions.

Carmel lodging. We then drove south
along the coast on spectacular Highway 1 to
Carmel and stayed at the third-generation
family-owned and operated Hofess House
with a view from the room of Carmel
Beach. Owner and GM Carrie Theis,
granddaughter of the founder, personally greeted
us, gave us a tour of the 36 one-of-a kind
guest rooms and meeting facility, and told
us of area golf options. I noted that largely
due to such personal attention to her guests,
the “no vacancy” sign was out.

• Leadership Lesson: If you want to keep
your business in the coveted “no vacancy”
status, personally attend to your guests’
needs and interests.

Carmel area dining. While in the Carmel
area, we dined at three superb restaurants:

• Mundaka. On a postcard perfect Saturday
evening in Carmel, we enjoyed authentic
Spanish cuisine at Mundaka at the invitation
of Marci Bracco, complete with a with
a waiter from Barcelona. Every delicious
bite reminded me of my travels in Spain.

• Grasings (Carmel): This cozy restaurant
features the finest in California cuisine and
a fabulous wine list. Owner and former chef
Kurt Grasings greeted us at our table and
talked about the menu, meeting options, the
wine list, and his annual food and wine
tour to Europe with his loyal patrons.

• Fandango (Pacific Grove). This world-
class, New York Times reviewed restaurant
features the French artistry of Pierre Bain,
who after 20 years of hosting the Club XIX
at Pebble Beach, opened his own place with
the help of Al Shugart, CEO of Seagate
Technology. Pierre greeted my wife and I
and told us the story behind food and fun
at Fandango. Our great waiter had
worked there seven years.

• Leadership Lesson: have a com-
petent chef in the kitchen (whoever
makes your product) and great cus-
tomer-facing service personnel who
love being there.

Sight seeing. I put 300 miles on
our “cool” rental car, a Mitsubishi
Eclipse, to see Pebble Beach (17
mile drive), Carmel Beach, dozens
of other parks and beaches, Palo Alto,
Stanford University, and back in San
Francisco Fisherman’s Wharf, Ghirardelli
Square, and Golden Gate Bridge.

In stark contrast to the service excellence
that we experienced on this trip were the
TSA “cattle corrals” for coach customers at
the San Francisco airport.

• Leadership Lesson: Deliver quality ser-
vice. “If I could put my finger on the one
thing that Disney does best,” said George
Kalogridis, president of Disneyland Resort,
it would be that we exceed expectations
in our service delivery. If you’ve ever been to a
Disney Theme Park or Resort, you likely
have a story to share about the Cast
Member who made you feel special. That’s
by design—a key part of everyone’s job is
to treat each and every Guest with respect,
to treat them as an individual and not just
part of the crowd—to give them that feeling
of being important.”

As the great Peter Drucker said, the key to
Leadership Excellence (or winning customers or
the US Open) is delivering service excellence,
day by day, guest by guest, hole by hole.
Great By Choice

Good is the enemy of the great.

by Jim Collins

SINCE GOOD IS THE enemy of great, when leaders settle for good, they forfeit becoming great. I like to study contrasts to detect the difference between good and great leaders and teams, and 10X organizations—those that achieve 10X the industry standard on key performance measures.

This much I can assure you: you do not become great (and remain great) by luck. You become great by choice (decisions) and discipline—sustained greatness isn’t a function of luck, happenstance, circumstance, or conditions.

In my research, I’ve tried to identify the X-factor of great leaders. It is not personality or charisma. Some great leaders have a personality bypass—others are very charismatic.

I find that great leaders have the humility to seek out people who are better and brighter than they are in their field. Yes, these leaders have ego, confidence and ambition, but they channel it outward—it is not about them: it is about the cause or company.

They’re concerned first with the Who—getting the right people in the right seats, before they address the Where question. They pick the right people, with the right skill for the right job at the right time—then serve a higher purpose.

One study of the contrast between two leaders and teams that faced the same conditions but achieved dramatically different results involved the 1911-12 Terra Nova Expedition to the South Pole. The British team was led by Robert Scott, the Norwegian one by Roald Amundsen. All 25 members of the Scott team died just 11 miles away from a supply station; the team led by Amundsen achieved all their goals.

After studying this case, and others like it, I conclude that the big difference is always the choices or decisions made by the leaders and the discipline to carry them out. I find that 10X companies are those that are led by leaders like Amundsen. And to try to capture this leadership style, I created a triangle with fanatic discipline on one side, productive paranoia on the second side and empirical creativity on the third side.

• By fanatic discipline, I mean the discipline to make the 20-mile march daily. Amundsen set a goal of traveling 20 miles a day, regardless of conditions; Scott tended to travel only in good weather and tried to make up for lost time. As a result, he was overextended and lacked essential provisions. While many men on Amundsen’s team complained about the daily 20-mile march, it was the key to their success.

• By productive paranoia, I mean considering every possible contingency and planning for it. For example Scott actually took motorized sleds, and when the engines froze, had to abandon them. His Plan B were ponies—not knowing that ponies sweat and in the Arctic sweat means death. So the men had to harness up and pull their own sleds. In contrast, Amundsen first talked to natives, the Eskimos, to learn that dogs are really the only way to go in the arctic, and he acquired from them some top sled dog teams.

• By empirical creativity, I mean that yes, you can be innovative and creative, but your creativity should be based on empirical evidence. If you lack this cultural software of the three-sided triangle, your team tends to suffer from chronic inconsistency. All three parts of the triangle are necessary. I call it the genius of the AND (not either/or, but both/and). For example, without productive paranoia, you tend to make lethal mistakes. The only mistakes you learn from are the ones you survive.

Since some people contend that success is more a matter of luck, I studied the role of luck in the results leaders achieve. While it’s true that some people benefit from good luck, over time luck is not a factor. It’s really what you do with the luck you get. And I call that return on luck. You can even achieve a good return on bad luck by learning from mistakes. Again, luck is not a cause of greatness, but bad luck without productive paranoia can mean the endgame.

I also studied the role of relationships. I discovered that the best leaders realize that life is people. They invest in key relationships, honor those relationships, and cherish the time they have with the people they love and work with. I learned this lesson, as many leaders do, the hard way when my wife had a double mastectomy. She’s now 10 years free from cancer, but as I look back, I realize that it was an inflection point in our lives—our relationship was made stronger and better because of the choices we made in dealing with it.

Lately, I’ve been working with cadets at West Point to develop leaders of character—an entire generation of Level 5 leaders. I find that the essence, the fundamentals of leadership don’t change over time, but great leadership is so fresh and rare that it always seems new.

Many people today complain about uncertainty and turbulence in our economy and society, but what I find abnormal is the 50-year period of post-WWII stability. When you study history, you find that turbulence is the norm, not the exception. Great leaders assume that bad things can and will happen and prepare for downturns. When the bad things happen, they have a shock absorber. The question is not if but when. They mass resources and reserves to absorb shocks. They also practice the ying-yang principle of preserve the core values and stimulate progress. The core principles remain constant, but the practices are adapted to culture, conditions, technologies, strategies, and economies.

For example, one common core value is respect for the individual, and yet this means different things in different cultures. For example, in Idaho, that value might mean give me lots of space and leave me alone. In China, it means almost the opposite. The core value doesn’t change but the application does. It’s why leadership, although it has common threads, is more of an art form than a science.

The world works poorly when those in power are motivated more by serving themselves than by seeking the welfare of those they lead.

Uncertainty, punctuated by episodes of chaos, characterize most of human history. Today, relentless technological disruption, the global nature of competition, and the instantaneous flow of information all contribute to instability. The good news is that the risks of uncertainty come with opportunity—environments characterized by turbulent disruption can go hand-in-hand with extra-
**Peer Learning**

**Bring improvements home.**

by Harry Hertz

All leaders have a gap or challenge to address—an area where they could benefit from gathering different insights and perspectives from other senior leaders. What if to fill the gap or attack the challenge, they could learn from and share best practices with a cohort group and with CEOs from award-winning national role models—and have a senior executive as a coach?

Graduates of the Baldrige Executive Fellows Program apply learning from networking, benchmarking, and sharing with other executives on a project of strategic significance in their firms. With capstone projects approved by their leaders, Fellows expand their markets, engage employees, and introduce new products—all based on learning received in the program.

As part of a collaborative year-long learning experience, Fellows share strategies and engage in dialogue with senior executives of Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award winners. The Fellows meet at Baldrige Award recipient sites, participating in tours and discussions focusing on the Baldrige systems perspective and key aspects of leadership. Fellows discuss topics that align with the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence (leadership; strategic planning; customer focus; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; workforce focus; operations focus; and results) but through the lens of leadership. And they gain insight into best leadership practices related to: setting directions; values, and expectations to balance stakeholder requirements, stimulate innovation, and ensure sustainability; managing for innovation and operational excellence; developing and executing strategy; ensuring customer-driven excellence; and valuing team members/partners.

Fellows follow a process that enables them to pose questions to each other and other senior executives and gain input on a project of strategic significance to their organizations. This process, repeated at each meeting, results in benchmarking visits among Fellows’ companies, comments on potential blind spots to explore, advice on approaches to pursue, and the hows and whys of leadership and planning. Some of the take-aways include:

- **Culture trumps strategy:** you need to set culture first or strategy accomplishment will be severely hindered.
- **Visionary leaders are passionate and authentic;** they walk the talk and they have very different styles, but their sincerity and clarity of purpose are visible.
- **Visionary leaders set aggressive goals** —and it’s amazing how often committed employees will achieve them.
- **Engage employees:** committed people are the lifeblood of organizations.
- **Focus and discipline are essential.** Leaders need to be relentless in making their aims clear and messages consistent.
- **Consumers/customers are wired, tired, and focused.** Delight them in a way that recognizes their situations and needs. They want honest relationships and supplier agility.
- **Your employees are constantly listening to you** for clues.
- **New employee orientation should touch the emotions in authentic ways.**

Gaining emotional commitment of people early speeds up learning by six months.

- **Communication between supervisors and employees** and among employees needs to be worth-based and not hurt-based. Too often words not chosen carefully lead to hurt rather than help when the goal is open communication to help a colleague achieve high performance.
- **A framework for organizing thoughts and processes is critical.** Baldrige provides that framework.

From exposure to Baldrige Award winners and their executives, Fellows bring home added learning for their staffs, including how to: leverage core competencies; build on strategic advantages; address strategic challenges; make strategic use of the voice of the customer; segment data and use the analysis; focus on appropriate metrics—selection, use, alignment; improve communication; and see with a systems perspective in their culture.

The program puts leaders together and uses peer learning to work through the Baldrige Criteria, enabling organizations to become more effective/profitable.

**ACTION:** Design your learning experience.

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**Competency Learning**

**LEADERS HAVE A GAP TO FILL.**

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**ACTION:** Design your learning experience.

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**-actionable strategies:**

- **LEADERS NEED TO PLACE CORE VALUES BEFORE MAKING DELIBERATE DECISIONS.**

- **ACTION:** Become great by choice.

- **ACTION:** Bring improvements home.
Developing Leaders

How are the people you lead doing?

by Noel Tichy

The BIG CHALLENGE

that organizations face today is growing and developing a strong pipeline of leadership talent for the future.

How are you doing as a leader? You can learn the answer by asking: How are the people you lead doing? Do they learn? Do they visit customers? Do they manage conflict and initiate change? Are they growing and being promoted? Is their performance better because of your interest in and dedication to their development?

Respected leaders of organizations that constantly outthink and outmaneuver their competitors build large pools of talent. They personally develop leaders at all levels. In their teaching sessions, they discuss the role of leaders in detecting trends and navigating turbulent shifts. They develop leaders who can spot trends and who have the courage to act. They encourage people to lead in their areas. They participate in their company’s leadership development (LD) program—teaching their point of view (POV) on how to grow the business and asking participants to come up with ideas for growing their areas. They might ask, If you were CEO, what would you do? They orchestrate open and candid discussion. They talk informally with participants, as someone who has been where they are, to impress on them the leadership duties—the conduct, honor, and teamwork.

For the past decade, customers, employees, investors and boards have demanded such leadership. When they don’t get it, they tend to overthrow leaders who fail to change ahead of the times and fail to reward their investors with rising share prices.

In winning organizations, top leaders develop leaders at all levels as a priority, pursued with the same zeal as new products, new customers, and competitive edge. In these organizations, leaders feel that it is their duty to develop others, and they do it personally instead of delegating the task to others.

Leaders are judged by sustained success not only in adding value for stakeholders but in developing leaders who constantly sense change, excite others about change, and implement change faster.

The best way to get more leaders is to have leaders develop leaders.

Leaders pass on their experience to others, who are expected to use it and develop their own leadership styles.

To develop others effectively, leaders must have a teachable point of view (TPOV)—an opinion on what it takes to win in the business and what it takes to lead other people. Once they have a TPOV, they think of creative ways to find teaching and learning opportunities. They turn every interaction with their people into a learning and teaching event and often set aside time to teach leadership outside of scheduled activities.

Leaders create stories about the future of their organizations. A TPOV becomes the basis for leaders to present a dynamic, compelling story that creates a case for change, a vision of where the organization is going, and how to get there. Once leaders have a story, they take bold actions that bring about lasting change.

In today’s global marketplace, pleasing customers and making a profit are functions of quick thinking and agile action. The only way to get speed is to have trust among leaders—people who are prepared to make smart decisions and implement them.

How can you best develop leaders at all levels? Winning organizations are known for preparing people to be effective leaders. Great leaders are great teachers. Organizations succeed over time not only because of their core competencies and use of modern technology and management tools, but also because they continuously regenerate leadership at all levels. Such leaders reinvent cultures, competencies, and tools at critical times. Experienced managers are required to teach, and part of their bonus is based on how much and how well they do it. You can only learn certain critical things from people who have been there and done that.

A culture of leaders developing leaders isn’t limited to senior leaders. All managers must see teaching and training as a big part of their job. The most powerful experience is when leaders teach their own POV. In our approach, participants benchmark other companies and leaders, examine their own experiences, then state their POV on leadership and how to win in their businesses. This approach helps leaders develop a TPOV in four leadership areas: ideas, values, edge, and energy.

• Ideas. A business starts with ideas about services/products in the marketplace. Those ideas lead the business to produce and deliver value to customers. Leaders must be able to explain to all stakeholders how the business succeeds in creating value.

• Values. Winning leaders articulate values and shape values that support business ideas. They avoid abstract terms, focusing instead on operational values that affect the business.

• Edge. Leadership is about making tough yes-no decisions. Winning leaders face reality, and make decisions about people, products, businesses, customers, and suppliers—even with imperfect data.

• Energy. Winning leaders are motivated, and they motivate others regarding change and transition. Leaders must teach people how to energize others, face-to-face and through large-scale organizational efforts.

Leaders with a TPOV have views about budgeting, planning, investing capital, and other things. Great leaders take a POV and use it as a springboard to action. A leader engages other people by translating his or her POV into a dynamic story. Most people think, recall, and communicate with stories that include a raise and fall, the overcoming of great odds, the upholding of principles despite the cost, questions of rivalry and succession. Leaders take the foundation of a POV and build stories about beating the competition, satisfying customers, and other successes.

We use the term story rather than vision. To stay ahead of the competition, organizations must act quickly and decisively. That means that leaders must offer more than a vision or static snapshot of where an organization
Leadership Brand

Know your ‘yes’ then say ‘no.’

by Susanne Biro

W hen was the last time you used this powerful two-letter word—No? I believe that you should say no more often—once you know your yes (the distinctive brand of your leadership, product, and organization).

I consider Seth Godin to be one of the great marketing minds of our time. Seth is a clear and poignant communicator of big, important ideas. Simply put, his messages matter not only to your ultimate professional success, but to the success of your industry overall.

Recently, Seth posted the following list of no’s on his blog: No. No, we don’t take clients like that. No, that’s not part of what we offer. No, that market is too hard for us to service properly. No, I won’t bend on this principle. No, I’m sorry. I won’t be able to have lunch with you. No, that’s not good enough. Will you please do it again? No, I’m not willing to lose my focus, and no, I’m not willing to compromise.

A simple but effective reminder of how critical it is to know who you—and your brand—are, is served up in the power of a single word: No. The clearer you can be about who you are, the stronger and more valuable your offering and your brand will be. When you know who you are—and what your values are, what you stand for, what you offer and how—the better you can set boundaries and say no to the many opportunities in which you could partake but probably shouldn’t.

As the artisan baker Lionel Poilâne reiterated, “In business, it’s very important to be able to say no when you feel like saying yes would mean losing your soul.” Knowing who you are remains at the core of our decisions and is a powerful place to come from so many don’t know who they are or try to become too many things to too many people. When you know who you are, you can focus—and say: No.

I find it curious that many people feel they have to be dishonest to others when faced with a choice between making up a story or simply saying:

“No, I’m sorry I can’t have lunch with you.” Why should the reality be so difficult to say? Far too many people feel they have to come up with an excuse or reason as to why they cannot—or simply do not want—to do something that’s not in their best interest personally or professionally.

The implications of this disempowered state—the avoidance of a simple no—is relevant to what occurs in more important professional matters. And, that is to say nothing of what it’s like to be on the receiving end of disempowered people. For example, if I ask you for lunch and you claim you didn’t get my voice message until too late, but when your story doesn’t add up, the result is that I no longer trust you. The outcome you were hoping for—to not damage your relationship because you simply don’t feel like lunching today—is exactly what results. It’s sad so many talented people feel so vulnerable professionally that they don’t yet know the success that can result when they finally stake claim as to who they really are.

In the words of the late Steve Jobs: “We say no to 1,000 things to make sure we don’t get on the wrong track or try to do too much. We’re always thinking of new markets we could enter, but it’s only by saying no that we can concentrate on the things that are really important.” Many of us admire the contributions and brilliance of Steve Jobs and wish we could be more like him. We fail to recognize that the chance to be the kind of person worthy of our own admiration is always right in front of us. And it’s summed up in a two-letter word, no.

Now, let’s make this personal by answering these questions: What are your top five values? What is your ideal professional reputation? Write it down. Do your answers to the above align with your organization’s brand? How well do your daily interactions deliver on your ideal professional reputation—your personal leadership brand? If I visited you and spoke with the people with whom you most interact, how many could recite your answer to questions 1 and 2? Given the above revelations, what is the one thing you must need to focus on in 2012?

Now, are you committed to saying no a bit more? I hope the answer is yes.

Susanne Biro is a senior leadership coach with Blueprint Leadership Development and co-author of Unleashed! Expecting Greatness. Email susannebiro@blueprintleadership.com.

ACTION: Have a great yes, then say no.

6 July 2012

www.LeaderExcel.com
Leader Paradoxes

Try creating common ground.

by Ralph Jacobson

Is this you? You use time management tools, and yet you struggle to balance your life. You and your team try trust-building, but your relationships remain strained. Your efforts to implement change are met with resistance—placing great risk on your ability to achieve strategic intent.

You seem to have few solid choices, few solutions. You wonder whether the issue is you, others around you, the job, or life itself. Seeing no options, you become frustrated. You want to spend more time on things important to you AND worried that if you do, you won’t succeed professionally. You want to delegate responsibilities to others AND worry that you’ll be held accountable if they don’t perform. You are caught between the boss who wants you to think strategically, AND direct reports who want you to focus on operations. You feel compelled to choose one side or the other AND sense that either choice will be wrong.

Problems have solutions—paradoxes do not. Paradoxes must be consistently balanced. To work through the issues, you have to change from the either/or formula to both/and. There must be: long term and short term; professional and personal time; stability and change; team and individual; me and us; centralization and decentralization! A paradox is a conflict between two perspectives that appear incapable of simultaneously existing—yet they must. A paradox has at least two apparent options, called polarities (short and long term). The effective management of a paradox requires balancing polarities.

The issue is not whether to choose one or the other, but both polarities simultaneously. What keeps you from doing this? You hate uncertainty/anxiety and tend to avoid or reduce it. Paradoxes create conditions that bring out fight-or-flight impulses. You feel compelled to take quick action to reduce tensions. You may choose to take an either/or approach to ameliorate the situation. But if you treat a problem like a paradox, the problem never goes away; if you treat a paradox like a problem, the paradox gets worse.

Ask three questions to determine if the issue is a problem to be solved or a paradox to be balanced: Have you tried implementing solutions for a long time—and nothing seems to help? Do you see at least two viable alternatives? Is the issue important to you? If so, the issue is a paradox that must be balanced.

Most paradoxes have two polarities: long term/short term; right for me/right for us; invest/take profits; diverse points of view/efficient use of time. Which polarity is right? Which is wrong? In a paradox they are both right and wrong. In our predicament, we may not see this so objectively. Rather, we are likely to . . .

• Choose one polarity over the other by either advocating our solution or passively withdrawing participation, assuming the issue has an obvious solution. The danger is that our solution may create the next issue or deepen the current paradox. The winner in any argument over a paradox tends to be the individual or function with the most resources or political clout.

• Accommodate both sides with a compromise that reduces the short-term tension between those who hold different viewpoints but does little to balance the paradox over time. The effective management of paradox requires strong emphasis of both polarities simultaneously.

• Stubborn emphasis on both polarities. Each party feels that they are right and won’t see the value of the other. The strain pulls the two sides further apart. A power struggle ensues, and if a winner emerges, the organization loses. The seeds of discord can survive far longer than the original issue.

By understanding paradox, individuals and functions that hold opposing points of view are more likely to both advocate their own perspective and see the potential value of the other’s perspective. Each sees that the optimal path forward may be to embrace totally opposite views. They leave their conversation with a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the positions, and with an agenda that includes possibilities that neither could have imagined at the start, and with mutual respect.

Drama of Unbalanced Paradox

Unmanaged and unbalanced paradoxes foster employee cynicism, wasted resources, and missed opportunities. Here are the predictable stages.

Stage 1: Dissatisfaction and fear. Unbalanced paradoxes reveal themselves in poor profits, high turnover, and in-fighting among functions. With the lack of a clear forward path, ambiguity and tension trigger employee awareness that the status quo is fraught with danger. Some employees cling to the past while others realize that their former responses are insufficient.

Stage 2: Advocacy. To ameliorate their anxieties, people believe that only one side can prevail. They lobby for that side to the exclusion of the other. Leaders must then referee internal battles or choose sides. However, their deciding in favor of one side hardens functional walls and prevents finding ways to harmonize opposing interests.

Stage 3: Sub-optimization. Choosing one side comes with costs, such as a focus on short-term gains rather than long-term profits, a concentration on a narrow customer set, or the dominance of one group over another. Well-intentioned choices sow the seeds of further dissatisfaction, sub-optimize the chance of finding a range of options, and limit the ability to respond effectively.

Stage 4: Negative consequences. Choosing one side over the other minimizes the ability to address present and future challenges. The same issues resurface as unnecessary turnover, reduced profits, lessened competitive strength, and a culture of cynicism. The drama continues as leaders seek to remedy the ills of the past by choosing the other side.

Managing paradoxes requires bringing together those who hold opposing viewpoints and establishing common ground based on careful listening. Wise leaders recognize the strengths in others’ perspectives and the deficiencies in their own. They accommodate various viewpoints. They balance paradox to affect change. Bringing together opposing perspectives enables the creation of new and more powerful possibilities.

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ACTION: Manage paradox to create change.
End of Leadership
At least as we now know it.

by Barbara Kellerman

Our fixation is on leaders. We assume that they have the keys to the kingdom, that they have most of the power, authority, and influence, and that they make the decisions that matter. Wrong! Leaders are increasingly vulnerable to forces beyond their control—and followers are increasingly entitled, emboldened, and empowered. Leaders are in decline, followers are on the rise. Moreover, the context pertains in historically unprecedented ways.

My new book, The End of Leadership, looks at this phenomenon from a particular vantage point of someone, me, who’s been a fellow traveler, nearly from the inception of the leadership industry—my catchall term for the now countless leadership centers, institutes, programs, courses, seminars, workshops, experiences, trainers, books, blogs, articles, websites, webinars, videos, conferences, consultants, and coaches claiming to teach people—usually for money—how to lead.

Being a leader has become a mantra. It’s presumed a path to money and power; a medium for achievement; a path to money and power; a means of survival; a panacea for social ills. Leaders are in decline, followers are on the rise. Moreover, the context pertains in historically unprecedented ways.

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And, there are other, parallel truths: that leaders of every sort are in disrepute; that the tireless teaching of leadership has brought us no closer to leadership nirvana than we were previously; that we don’t have much better idea of how to grow good leaders than we did 100 or even 1,000 years ago; that the context is changing in ways leaders seem unwilling or unable fully to grasp; that followers are becoming on the one hand disappointed and disillusioned, and on the other entitled, emboldened, and empowered; and, lastly, that notwithstanding the enormous sums of money and time that have been poured into trying to teach people how to lead, over its roughly 40-year history the leadership industry has not in any major, meaningful, measurable way improved the human condition.

Here is the problem framed another way—visually. Imagine a graph with two trajectories. The first is that of the leadership industry, showing a nearly non-stop rise over the past 40 years. The second is that of leaders, showing a nearly non-stop decline over the same time. Leaders of every stripe are far less respected and trusted than they were when the leadership industry was in its infancy. I’m neither proposing a one-to-one correlation or direct relationship nor denying that some individuals and institutions have benefited from their investment in the leadership industry (each year billions of dollars are poured into leadership training/development). Rather I am saying is that it has not had an obvious beneficent effect on society at large.

It’s impossible to exaggerate the degree to which the word leadership and the imagined ideal of becoming a leader have infiltrated our collective consciousness. My place of employment, Harvard University, exemplifies the trend. Virtually all of its professional schools boast the words leader or leadership in its mission statement: the mission of the Harvard Law School is to “educate leaders who contribute to the development of justice and the well being of society.” The mission of the Harvard Medical School is to “create and nurture . . . the best people committed to leadership in alleviating suffering and disease.” The mission of the Harvard Divinity School is to “educate women and men for service as leaders in religious life and thought.” The missions of the Harvard Business School and the Harvard Kennedy School are more of the same—and other institutions of higher education share the fixation.

I think this leadership lockstep rather a pathetic manifestation of a fad or fashion. Why does the Harvard Law School insist it educates leaders? Does it no longer suffice to excel at what you do, to be a consummate professional, a lawyer, who chooses, for whatever reason, not to lead, but instead to hunker down to be, say, a legal scholar, or a local lawyer—or even, heaven forefend, a follower?

To obsess about leaders at the expense of leadership is wrong-headed—as it is to obsess about leaders and followers at the expense or even exclusion of context—especially at this moment in history when contextual intelligence is of paramount importance.

The leadership industry is ahistorical. We do not make clear to our customers that followers have always been important, and that today they’re more important than ever. In the last 40 years, the years during which the leadership industry came to pass, evolutionary changes in culture and revolutionary changes in technology, social media in particular, have greatly changed patterns of dominance and deference so as to favor the ostensibly powerless over the apparently powerful. These changes are, moreover, transcendent—they affect each of the different sectors and every country and culture.

The End of Leadership, then, tells two tales. The first is about leadership and change—how followers (for example, political protesters and shareholder activists) increasingly impact the course of human affairs; and about how leaders, no matter how highly positioned, increasingly are vulnerable to those lowlier than they. The second is about the leadership industry—about the problems associated both with leadership as a scholarly pursuit and as a pedagogy of practice. I ask: how can, how should, leadership education and development be re-imagined, re-invented, and re-configured to be in keeping with the tempo of the time?

It is not an idle or idiosyncratic question. Even blatant bastions of corporate conformity such as management consultants are looking for new ways of teaching leadership, drawing on fields such as philosophy, psychology, evolutionary biology and even neuroscience.

I would not recommend teaching how to be a good leader without teaching how to be a good follower. Nor would I support instruction on either leadership or followership without instruction on the immediate and distant context. But in the end this is not about my preferences; rather it is a call to action in response to the recognition that whatever the leadership industry is doing right at the micro level, at the macro level it still has a long way to go.

Barbara Kellerman is author of The End of Leadership (HarperCollins). Email barbara_kellerman@hbs.edu.

ACTION: Reimagine your leadership education.
Reinventing Leadership  
_The end of LD, at least as we know it._

by Ken Shelton

**As our concepts of leadership evolve, our leadership development (LD) methods must evolve with them to match the new nature of work and organizations and to make these new leaders highly effective.**

Some 25 years before Covey and I wrote about the habits of highly effective people, Drucker defined what disciplines made leaders (executives) effective. Today we need the same prescience. He once said, “I don’t predict—I just look out the window and see what’s visible but not yet seen.”

As I look out my window, I see that the nature of leadership is changing to suit the new nature and structure of work and organizations. This, in turn, is causing the best LD practitioners to redesign their LD programs/processes.

Since the who, why, what, where and how of work now change by the year (not by the century as in times past), internal LD practitioners are dancing as fast as they can to keep up (and external consultants are pitching a new LD package a day). Managers and leaders must now cope with employees who may … work at home or half a world away; work for more than one company; mix parallel careers with spouses; be motivated by knowledge, passion, and purpose as well as pay; act as social entrepreneurs; and play _money ball_ (not as in times past), _not_ as in times past, but _as_ in times past).

During the 1950s and 60s, Drucker was immersed in the _organizational mindset_. Starting in the 1970s, he became disenchanted with much of OB and its management practices.

For three decades, I’ve documented what Drucker almost single-handedly created, albeit unintentionally—the _leadership era_. Ironically, Drucker was not a _guru_ looking for _followers_; in fact he _repeled_ or _expelled_ them. Like his contemporary, Edwards Deming, Drucker worked alone. Isolation afforded him independent insight—the flash of brilliance that instantly illuminated the answer to the pert question _What’s wrong (or different) with this picture?_

Among other sneaky aspects of management and leadership, Drucker decried: the separation of elite managers from their constituents; the attraction of most leaders to a cadre of social and political admirers; leaders divorced from line managers, front-line workers, and customers; leadership separated from core principles like mutual responsibility, sustainability, stewardship, service, and shared sacrifice; leaders divorced from nature and natural laws; leaders divorced from product innovation and from those who make and sell products and serve customers; leadership promotion/selection based on appearances.

His cries caused a host of adherents to reinvent management and leadership—and LD programs, priorities, principles, processes, and practices.

**Reinventing Leadership and LD**

Here are a few Drucker-inspired shifts in leadership and LD:

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<th>New Leadership</th>
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<td>Economy: Profitability</td>
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<th>Old LD</th>
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<td>Classes/content</td>
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<td>Solo and site learning</td>
<td>Social/mobile learning</td>
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<td>Maps and charts</td>
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<td>Teacher/consultant</td>
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<td>Skillsets/ mindsets</td>
<td>Social/political savvy</td>
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<td>Dominance/deference</td>
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<td>Draw from business</td>
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<td>Focus on managers</td>
<td>Focus on followers</td>
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**10 Development Mismatches**

Drucker debunked the _mythology_ of management. Ironically, many of his salient lessons for leaders have no correlation to current development methodology! Here are 10 examples.

1. Creative abandonment. Drucker taught that leaders need to ask, _When do we stop pouring resources into former cash cows that no longer generate the income to justify their existence?_ He asked leaders, “Don’t tell me what you’re doing—tell me what you _stopped_ doing.” Most new leaders are trained to milk sacred cows—not kill or abandon them.

2. Hiring, developing, promoting, and firing. Drucker talked about these as _life-and-death decisions_. He warned leaders to be well acquainted with the candidates and familiar with their strengths and values to ensure a good fit. Yet few emerging leaders practice making such _life-and-death decisions_.

3. Outside-in perspective. Drucker said that leaders must become _outside-in champions_ who advocate initiatives that focus on the customers and other constituents—and help staff people to sell and service clients better. Few LD programs help leaders do this.

4. Marketing/sales. Drucker invited leaders to ask, _Who of our non-customers (missing customers) should we be doing business with?_ Few LD programs venture into this vital area.

5. Nurture innovation. Drucker was aware of barriers that inhibit innovation. He believed that _every brain should be in the game_. Few LD programs prepare leaders to be _innovation champions_.

6. Collaboration with competitors. Drucker encouraged collaboration with firms that can perform the service better and cheaper (only marketing and innovation were seen as _sacrosanct_ in-house activities). Few leaders practice forming such alliances.

7. Leader as conductor. Drucker compared leaders to _conductors _of an orchestra—_guiding_ professional players as masters of their own domain. Few emerging leaders have experience as conductors of professional talent.

8. Decision-making. Drucker knew managers needed experience in _decision-making_ to ensure they’re not afraid of failure, and know when no decision is required. Few new leaders see that a decision made, even if wrong, is usually better than no decision.

9. Strengths and priorities. Drucker coached leaders to ask, _What needs to be done?_ , to limit priorities to two tasks at a time, to ask, _Of those things that would make a difference, which are right for me_? and to share purpose and priorities. Leaders must know their _style/strength_.

10. Engage in character development. When we speak of _executive development_, said Drucker, “we mostly talk about developing people’s strength. Character is not developed that way—it is developed _inside and not outside_. Leaders must think expansively and responsibly about their footprint in the world, about their core values and commitments.

Eliminating such mismatches will improve LD programs.

KEN SHELTON is editor/CEO of Leadership Excellence. Email Kens@LeaderExcel.com.

**ACTION:** Match LD with new roles of leaders.
Strategic Leaders

**Develop a strategic mindset.**

*by Michael Miloff and Lois J. Zachary*

As the world becomes more complex and interconnected, strategic change must become multi-organizational and multidisciplinary. And yet, many leaders lack the strategic mindset and collaborative process skills and tools needed to drive strategic change.

Mentors play a key role in helping leaders hone strategic leadership skills and harness the multi-organizational and disciplinary synergies that drive strategic change. By working with leaders one-on-one, mentors can help them become more strategic by having them reflect on their experiences and relationships, set stretch goals, try new behaviors, and gain and integrate feedback.

Seven Ways Mentors Can Help

We’ve discovered seven strategic leadership components that enable leaders to bring fresh thinking and perspectives to advance priority strategic initiatives. Here are seven ways mentors can help the evolving strategic leader develop in each area.

1. **Gain self-awareness and manage emotions.** To avoid making irrational decisions—especially under stress, time pressures, and information uncertainty—leaders need to quickly grasp the right action to take. Mentors can hold up a mirror and help leaders by facilitating their reflection about mistakes and successes in judgment; identifying their decision-making and behavioral patterns; and 3) asking questions that open up honest assessment of what they could have done differently.

2. **Expand knowledge.** It’s difficult for leaders to capitalize on opportunities and respond to threats unless they grasp the technical and social domains and societal trends relevant to their business. In our knowledge-intensive but often siloed world, breakthroughs come by applying insights and solutions from other spheres of work and life. Mentors can expose leaders to a broad range of perspectives, whether through reading, talking to experts and clients, exploring the power of metaphor, brainstorming, or extracting lessons from their customer experiences and lives.

3. **Hone vision and focus on the right actions.** Facing countless problems, effective leaders focus on the central opportunities, threats, and solutions to build a compelling vision and strategy. By saying no to seductive distractions, strategic leaders position themselves to say yes to the right actions. Mentors can help leaders avoid pursuing interesting, secondary, or easy issues, and focus on the central issues.

4. **Empowerment and process management skills.** Leaders create synergy. They energize, mobilize, and focus participant intelligence, talent, creativity, and accountabilities. Mentors can help leaders build key relationships and exercise process leadership by: creating maps of problems and potential solutions, leading processes that generate strategic insight and focus, engaging key players by creating excitement, and building ownership.

5. **Presence and entrepreneurialism.** Presence and credibility are prerequisites to be taken seriously. Entrepreneurialism enables leaders to see and seize opportunity, develop and apply creative solutions, take risk, tenaciously pursue goals, and resiliently bounce back from defeat—valuable attributes in a competitive world that values innovation. Mentors can help leaders develop presence and entrepreneurialism.

6. **Build and maintain personal networks.** What people think about a leader shapes if and how they approach that leader and what they offer—whether it’s with information, opportunities, or collaboration. To attract and capitalize on the talents of others, strategic leaders need to have good networks and a reputation as someone trustworthy. Mentors can help leaders build their network, profile, and brand with other leaders, clients, partners, experts, and influencers by engaging these parties in dialogue that explores for synergy.

7. **Pursue personal development.** Mentors collaborate with leaders they mentor in the design and implementation of their personal learning and development plan. It begins by focusing on the future and where that leader wants to be. Mentors help leaders integrate their career and personal aspirations and values.

Leaders must be learners and build their strategic leadership capabilities so they can inspire, mobilize, and create ownership for the future. Mentors play a key role in making this happen.

More Ways to Support SLD

Beyond mentoring, you can develop strategic leadership skills in five ways.

• **Use a competency model.** Using a leadership framework, define the knowledge, skill, attitude, and personal and network competencies for being a leader who can harness collaborative processes to create strategic change.

• **Concurrently address organizational strategy and personal capacity.** Ensure that any development process attends to both external situations and internal personal capacities. Turn strategic initiatives into opportunities for reflection, feedback, and personal growth and turn professional growth into organizational benefit.

• **Demand structure.** Build a demand structure for showcasing what mentees have learned and the practical implications. This adds excitement, engages senior leadership, and creates a healthy tension and motivation for development.

• **Deploy tools and templates.** Work with leaders to ensure they develop strategic management tools and customized templates. This helps each generation of leaders learn, apply the best techniques, and enhance the tools.

• **Support communities of practice (COP).** Facilitate COPs that promote personal development, network-building, cross-organizational learning, peer support, rapid diffusion of innovative practices, and a culture of collaboration.

Adapt these approaches to the leader’s context, budget, and culture.

**ACTION:** Develop your strategic leadership.
Political Roles

This comes with being the boss.

by Linda Hill and Kent Lineback

Many managers understand that dealing with political dynamics is part of their jobs, but they’re reluctant to play the games. They dislike conflict and competition and consider political give-and-take mostly an ego-driven waste of time. To them, it’s all about coering or manipulating others, a world where who you know matters more than what you know, where winners win because they’re better connected, not because the business case is stronger.

So they tend to deal with others only when there’s a problem or need. Otherwise, they focus on their group and its work. Judge me by results, they think, not by how many people I know or backs I slap. Many managers become disillusioned, even cynical, about the way organizations work. So they step back. That’s a wrong-headed response. They can’t do their jobs as managers without engaging the organization.

Consider your many political roles:

- You troubleshoot for your group. When you disagree with another group because you have different priorities, you must deal with them to keep the work flowing smoothly. If you don’t confront them quickly, they might blow up in your face. If a dispute between your customer service group and the sales department festers, frustrated customers might shift to a competitor.

- You act as information conduit between your group and the outside. You’re the central clearing house of information passing into and out of your group. Your people deal with others for day-to-day work, but most non-routine info passes through you. The new product in another division is failing. Not your problem? It will be when there are budget cuts. To get such info, you must be plugged in to the broader organization.

- You negotiate for your group. Do you think your bosses know what you and your group need or that they’ll provide it if you merely ask? Resources (like money, space, support, time, and information) are always scarce. You must negotiate with your bosses and colleagues for them. You also negotiate arrangements and expectations with others—what will be done, how, and when. If there’s giving and taking to be done, you can decide what to ask for and what to give up and who can create and join coalitions of like-minded colleagues in support of common interests.

- You speak for your group. You are your group’s official spokesperson, champion, ambassador, lobbyist, advocate, and PR flack. Your people and the organization expect you to play this role. How your group is perceived by outsiders depends largely on your efforts in spreading the good news and in personally explaining to other groups involved the cause of any problem and the solution! Only you can do this.

- You protect your group. You serve as a buffer between your group and outsiders, including senior management. Your people expect you to challenge inappropriate or unrealistic directives and protect them from excessive bureaucracy. You act as a gate-keeper for pressures and demands as you manage the sometimes conflicting needs of your team/organization. A weak manager—one without influence—can only pass on others’ demands.

Your job is to integrate your group and keep all parties working together. You stand with one foot inside your group, the other outside. This role comes with your formal authority, which puts you in charge and makes you the contact point for your group with outsiders. You must show competence in this role to win the trust of others.

Consequences of Nonperformance

You can’t avoid the political side and still do your job. If you don’t exercise influence effectively, if you hold yourself above the political push-and-pull, you limit your effectiveness and suffer seven dire consequences: 1) problems go unresolved between your group and others; 2) disagreements get resolved against your wishes; 3) your group and others operate on incomplete or inaccurate information; 4) others misperceive and misunderstand your group; 5) others distract your people because no one negotiates, filters, or mediates outside pressures; 6) your people lack the resources they need; and 7) your people think you’re letting them down—as a manager, you’re both incompetent and lacking in character because you don’t care enough about them and their work to provide what they need.

In all organizations, there are unprincipled game players who derive satisfaction not from the work they do or the purpose they serve but from plotting, scheming, and winning internal battles. And, sadly, poisonous political climates and cultures encourage such behavior. If you work in such a place, look for work somewhere else.

Yet, most organizations are political environments where decisions are made and conflicts resolved through influence. To succeed in them, you need influence. And, to build and exercise influence, you must manage the inevitable political dynamics. You can’t focus on your group alone, since no group can succeed in isolation. You must influence people over whom you have no formal control—to get what your group needs and to work for what’s best and right. Your people count on you to do this so they can excel at their work; and the organization depends on voices like yours to keep it on the right track.

You develop influence by understanding how organizations actually work and embracing the political side. Do you see organizations as rational hierarchies in which information flows up the chain of command and directions come down? Do you believe influence should come from position or title, augmented by track record and expertise? Do you consider any effort to gain influence in other ways to be an egotistical drive for status or control to manipulate others or build empires? Do you believe that differences should be settled by a rational search for the best or right solution, which will be obvious to all intelligent, right-thinking people, all of whom share the desire to work together? Do you consider conflict a failure of management or organizational design?

Real organizations are more complicated because they’re composed of people. Management is largely about negotiating paradoxes and trade-offs. Hence, all managers must recognize certain realities in order to deal with organizations as they are—not as they should be.


ACTION: Perform your political role as leader.
Strategist-in-Chief
Take charge of your strategy.

by Cynthia A. Montgomery

Why do so many strategies fail? In recent months we’ve seen sad stories unfold at Kodak, Hewlett Packard, Nokia, Yahoo, RIM, and Sony, to name a few. My answer is that the strategies have not been dynamic.

Many strategies—and many leaders—get stuck because they see strategy as a problem to be solved and settled; in fact, leaders need to think of it as an open, not closed, file; something that evolves and changes, not something that is static. Strategy needs constant, not periodic attention. That’s why leaders must be strategists. No one else can shoulder the responsibility of setting its course and seeing the journey through. Who else will do it?

Only you can be the steward of your business’s future. I learned this after my teaching shifted from MBA students to executive education, particularly a five-year stint in Harvard’s flagship program for owner-managed companies. As I worked on strategic issues with these leaders, I saw how invested they were in making the right choices. Yet I saw too much popular wisdom about strategy wasn’t serving them well. Few, had a long-run competitive advantage that is the Holy Grail of strategy.

As strategist-in-chief, your aim is threefold:

1. Be clear about the company’s purpose: Most leaders struggle to explain why their companies exist. They can tell me about their industries and products, but can’t articulate the specific needs their businesses aim to fill, or the unique points that separate them from competitors. Nor have they thought concretely about where they want their companies to be in 10 years, and the internal and external forces that will get them there. Yet every concept of strategy—sustainable competitive advantage, positioning, differentiation, added value—flows from purpose.

2. Live with your strategy daily: Any strategy will eventually fail if leaders see it as a finished product or solved problem. Strategy is a journey of change and evolution that needs continuous leadership. Too often, managers zero in one competitive advantage, expecting it to be sustainable; when it gets into trouble, they hunker down and protect the status quo instead of rising to meet the needs of a new reality. But any one advantage, even a company’s system of value creation, is only part of a bigger story, one frame in a motion picture. The need to manage across frames makes a leader’s role in strategy vital.

Sustainable competitive advantages are rare. Whatever constitutes strategic advantage will eventually change, and defending one that has outlived its time will lock you into the past. As a leader/strategist, ensure that your company continues to add value.

3. Be the strategic leader of your team: In setting the strategic direction and tone, you’ll be guiding team members—deal them in. Your ability to connect with and motivate others is key. Managers in marketing, production, service, as well as C-suite executives must make decisions daily that should be based on a shared sense of what the company is trying to be and do. If they disagree about that or misunderstand it, how can they make consistent decisions that move the company forward?

The communication has to be two-way. You need the input of those at the top and on the front lines. You need the knowledge and insight of those who face the customers, grapple with the realities of production and logistics, and compete for the resources they need.

We discussed this in class recently. One leader said that strategy was properly the exclusive province of a corporate elite—20 or so people who had the real picture going to an offsite, from which wisdom would then trickle down (the old view). Later in the session another member suggested that we hear from a manager whose company had made a remarkable turnaround in a tough industry. He told his story: the idea was formed, and everyone was brought on board. I then asked, what did he mean by everyone? He said, “All 5,000.”

Becoming a strategist-in-chief can transform your business. As strategist, you watch over the organization, guiding its course, making choices that bring it back to center day after day, even as you choose when the center—the purpose—should evolve. You must decide whether or not to lean into the wind, and whether your strategy can withstand the elements. Your purpose will change because the industry changes, tastes change, and your people change and bring new strengths and skills to the enterprise. Ultimately, it will change because you make the call to do so.

Cynthia A. Montgomery is author of The Strategist: Be the Leader Your Business Needs (HarperBusiness).

ACTION: Become the strategist in chief.
Management Culture
Learn to cope with three pressures.

by Denise Moreland

Imagine everyone going to work every day to do only and exactly what they love! All the work gets done through the diversity of skills, interests and talents woven into a whole that is much greater than the sum of the parts!

For many people, doing work they love is only a dream. Frustration, power struggles, drama and dealing with difficult bosses are realities that impede engagement, making people dread Mondays and live for the weekends.

With excellent resources available to leaders on how to manage talent and inspire employees, why are so many people still unhappy at work?

The cause of most discontent at work is management culture—rules, beliefs, expectations, and language that pressure managers to behave in ways that undermine goals and the best thinking. Culture is the collective personality of a group. It guides behavior toward conformity, providing the principles people must follow to be accepted. At its best, culture reflects human connections based on shared values and identity.

At its worst, culture reflects biases with the power of collective exclusion and judgment toward those deemed unacceptable. Since we want to belong, most of us follow cultural norms, even when they go against our values or conscience.

Culture changes when individuals question prevailing rules, assumptions, beliefs and language, and offering alternative norms for a better future.

Management culture provides guidance about how bosses are supposed to behave. Sadly, rules and expectations placed on managers are based on outdated assumptions about human motivation. New thinking about how to engage employees gets layered on top of the old, putting managers in contradictory roles. Managers are expected to be hard-nosed and soft-hearted, advocates and disciplinarians, controllers and coaches, supervisors and leaders. They are expected to provide the big picture and know all of the details, to be experts in their fields and in the art of human relationships. They are often expected to do the impossible.

Three Categories of Concern

In 20 years in middle management, I realized that cultural pressures placed on managers most in need of questioning fall into three categories: Ownership, Superiority, and Systems dynamics.

1. Ownership matters. The common belief is that managers own everything about the work and the employees who do it. When employees feel no ownership of the work or the organization, it is difficult for them to invest in its quality or success. When they feel their time and talent belong to management, they feel resentful and guarded about sharing their ideas. To engage the imagination and commitment of employees, ownership must be shared. Management must view employees as partners in the work and organizational goals.

2. Superiority tango. Management culture pressures leaders to view themselves as superior to those they manage. Bosses do have superior authority, but this does not mean that bosses are superior in other ways. They don’t possess superior knowledge, intellect, insight, skills or judgment. Still, there is cultural pressure to pretend bosses know best what to do and how to do it. Don’t question management, Do as you are told and Don’t outshine the boss are unwritten rules in the culture of management that restrict employee engagement and rob organizations of vitality.

The superiority tango refers to the tension caused by the presumed superiority of bosses, and implied inferiority of employees. The most common tangos are coercion and compliance, control and resignation, domination and submission.

When managers are expected to have better judgment than employees, employees feel forced to follow every directive, idea and whim of the boss—even when it makes no sense, is a waste of time, or is blatantly wrong.

When leaders are perceived to possess superior knowledge, they often feel pressured to control. Micromanaging leaders create resignation in employees who then disengage their creativity.

When managers assume a posture of superiority, they become the center of employee activity, dominating every aspect of the work, which requires employees to submit to management styles, preferences and personalities.

When management asserts superiority, most employees accept their inferior status. Those who rebel by refusing to comply with directives that don’t make sense are cited for insubordination and punished to elicit more docile responses.

Instead, we should listen to them. Employees who refuse to follow the unwritten rules may be our best hope for transforming culture—for creating cultures of inclusion and creativity, where everyone is engaged, working from their strengths fueled by their passions.

When managers act like parents, employees often act like children, creating a vicious cycle that serves neither well. Managers must challenge behaviors and beliefs that feed parental instincts rather than treat adults as children.

Another model of management culture is to view organizations as well-oiled machines and managers as master engineers. But human elements such as creativity, innovation, passion, enthusiasm and commitment require more than an engineering model of management.

Democracy as a system of governance is gaining traction within management culture. The global democratization of information has put new expectation on leaders for greater access, transparency and accountability. We must embrace Democracy to move management culture forward to new levels of engagement, productivity, and collaboration.

Imagine a workplace where leaders lead with integrity, honesty and transparency, setting directions that make sense and making decisions that are broadly supported. Imagine employees trusting management, and management trusting employees. Imagine everyone going to work to do only and exactly what they love! Now, make it true!


ACTION: Challenge rules that don’t make sense.
Seven Disciplines of Highly Effective Leaders

by Jeff Wolf

Today, there is great demand for a new generation of highly effective leaders because of the competitive global marketplace and retiring senior leaders. Where will they come from? How can they be developed?

Highly effective leaders practice 7 Disciplines to achieve greatness:

D1. Alignment: They align their motive and mission, purpose and passion, with a market need and business strategy. To check alignment, seek feedback on how your behavior affects your boss, peers and direct reports to learn how others perceive you. Such feedback indicates areas for improving your relationships. Since perception is reality, to lead well, you must manage perceptions. By asking questions and seeking feedback, you open up a dialogue so you can receive feedback on your behavior. You also show humility and gain credibility as you ask: What can we do to make the organization, team, group or department better?

D2. Casting: They hire smart—hire the right people and put them in the right positions. They choose people for key positions as carefully as a casting director. Recruit, hire, and promote people who fit the culture and brand and empower them to act well their part. Only the right people (talent who do great work) are your greatest assets. Hire the wrong people, and take corrective measures with underperformers. Surround yourself with the best and brightest people you can find—people who are smarter and have better skills than you for their positions. Set high standards, and never compromise them in hiring. Hire people with great attitudes and essential skills—they will lift the skills and mindsets of those around them. Hire slowly, and fire fast. Leave a position open until you find the right person who is also the right fit for the job.

D3. Development: They train, motivate, build, empower, and retain an optimal high-performing, creative and innovative team. They invest wisely in people. Develop, recognize, reward and promote from within. Keep on board a high performing team. Great leaders create more leaders at all levels by nurturing their development. They don’t just delegate work—they delegate decision-making powers. When people have the authority to make certain decisions, they feel more responsible and loyal. So, empower your people. Don’t micro-manage them—turn them loose to perform the jobs. Explain the task, tell them what needs to be done and why, but don’t tell them how to do it. Then they’ll take ownership, accept accountability, think creatively and offer ideas. When they feel you value their ideas, they’ll find ways to boost performance.

D4. Delivery: They create a quality product, brand it, sell it well, and satisfy and retain customers and clients to deliver desired results. They seek to continuously improve their quality products/services, have high employee engagement and customer satisfaction. They use their drive and ambition to make things happen, to make a difference daily. They’re excited about their role, always seeking ways to improve and motivate and inspire their people. They get things done in ways that maintain relationships and sustain results. To boost their self-esteem, catch people doing something right. When people believe in themselves, they achieve amazing things. Inspire them to provide outstanding customer service. The happier your customers, the more they return.

D5. Communication/motivation: They listen with empathy and speak with honesty to gain and maintain trust with stakeholders. Make your communication count. The late Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart, said, “Communicate everything to your associates; the more they know the more they care. Once they care, there is no stopping them.” Today, many people feel vulnerable. Open the lines of communication; let them know that you care about their personal lives as well as their work. Great leaders are great listeners who connect with people. Learn through listening—listen openly, ready to learn, as opposed to listening defensively, ready to rebut. Communicate a clear, compelling and inspiring vision: 1) here’s where we’re going; 2) here’s why; 3) here’s how we’re going to get there; 4) here’s your role; and 5) here’s how we’ll work together to get there.

People are motivated in two ways: intrinsically and extrinsically. Extrinsic motivation involves outside factors: money, power or position. Intrinsic motivation comes from within: the desire for pride, a passion for the work and the desire to do a great job. Learn what each person needs and provide it.

D6. Social/emotional/political intelligence: They network regularly, socialize to maintain core relationships with key stakeholders, and have some fun at work. They develop healthy lifestyle habits and patterns and guide people using their social/emotional/political intelligence. Working hard and having fun are not mutually exclusive. So, appoint two CFOs; the traditional financial officer and the chief fun officer, who creates ways for people to have fun at work. Fun breeds creativity, energy, productivity, innovation, and profitability. Humor helps people through tough times, reduces stress and absenteeism, and brings them closer together. When people are having fun, the brain produces endorphins, which help heal the body. People will take appropriate risks if they can laugh at their mistakes. When you laugh at yourself, your employees will find you more approachable.

D7. Sustainability: They avoid common mistakes and sins that often derail other leaders. They may be promoted for their technical know-how and job performance, but once in a management or leadership position, they gain the soft people skills required to sustain high performance. They maintain credibility and avoid pitfalls by being honest, forthright, and open—their values, allegiances and priorities are beyond reproach. Their strong character and integrity are manifest by their walking the walk and talking the talk. They create a climate of positivity, punctuated with frequent praise and recognition.

By utilizing these leadership skills, you can change attitudes and create a positive, nurturing culture.

ACTION: Cultivate these seven disciplines.

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LE
Trust Required
Control is not an option.

by Don Peppers and Martha Rogers

Managers always assume there is a key to managing events and situations. Engineers solve problems with mathematical certainty, while financial analysts calculate values, tabulate costs, and predict sales trends with reasonable confidence. But as technology empowers social relationships, through social media platforms and smartphone capabilities, the predictability of events and situations is diminishing, because social relationships depend on complex feedback loops that generate unpredictable outcomes.

This is difficult for many managers to accept. Traditional business is a discipline, not a social conversation. And the discipline of marketing is manageable. It could never reasonably be compared to the social dynamic at a cocktail party, or to a freewheeling discussion among many different participants. But social interactions involve each participant’s awareness of and independent reaction to the behaviors of other participants, and these feedback loops subvert most efforts to impose control, or to manage or predict the behavior of the system.

While our interconnected age is characterized by more random fluctuations and complex-system oscillations, our brains are not equipped to deal with such unpredictability in a rational way. We prefer control and order. We crave such unpredictability in a rational way. Our brains are not equipped to deal with complex-system oscillations, and the predictability of events and situations is diminishing, because social relationships depend on complex feedback loops that generate unpredictable outcomes.

In times of unpredictability, the most logical course of action is to do the right thing and hope for the best. You can’t control what people say, but you can control what your company does. If you focus on earning and keeping the trust of customers, you’re focusing more on long-term value creation—so you’ll be less likely to fall victim to the same self-serving, retrospectively obvious biases that afflict all short-term management decisions.

People are human. You are human. And yet you need to be aware of your own weaknesses.

The most valuable asset that you can have, when dealing with random events and unpredictable trends, is trust. Enjoying the trust of customers is even more vital today. Trust is a long-term quality, conferring long-term financial benefits. When you focus on earning and keeping the trust of customers, you’re focusing more on long-term value creation—so you’ll be less likely to fall victim to the same self-serving, retrospectively obvious biases that afflict all short-term management decisions.

Six Strategies to Succeed
To succeed in an unpredictable world, leaders need six strategies:

1. Use analytic techniques that don’t require high accuracy. Simple statistical models are often more reliable for dealing with complex situations than more detailed models. This is good advice for marketing professionals. The problem in dealing with social networks and other complex systems is that a sophisticated model is more likely to fit past data well but fail to predict the future, while a more basic model is less likely to fit past data, but more likely to anticipate possible future scenarios.

2. Prepare for multiple outcomes. Don’t try to make the one right guess as to what will most likely happen, make multiple guesses. Place many small bets on a variety of options. This is the way any innovative process works, and innovation is a good analogy for prediction. Don’t bet the farm on the Edsel, without also having a Mustang or Thunderbird in your portfolio.

3. Find and rely on the predictable elements of the situation. You can’t predict who the next Super-User will be for any social network, but you know that all networks have them. Likewise, you can’t know how long it will be before technology makes it possible for a specific customer to find out you tricked him into paying more than necessary, but sooner or later technology will make it possible. Just because you don’t know which particular day it will rain doesn’t mean you should sell the umbrella.

4. Focus your evaluation of initiatives on the inputs, not just the outputs. Randomness will confound even the best efforts to produce results. But when you assess a project or initiative’s effectiveness, evaluate the quality of the decision to undertake it. Don’t rely solely on the actual outcome of the project (bad or good), but examine the quality of the process that went into its planning and execution. A bad leader might be elected despite the evidence, but as long as the election is fair, don’t throw out the democratic process.

5. Remain agile, and strive to respond quickly. There’s no substitute for awareness, listening, and detecting events as soon as they happen. Focus on “sense and respond” as an organization, and empower your people to act quickly and decisively. Have a social media policy that is strong on principle but flexible. And stage a social-media fire drill every so often.

6. Trust-proof your business. You have to be prepared for failure, success, and everything in between. But if others know they can trust you, then you’ll never be on your own. As long as your focus is always on doing the right thing, then your customers, your employees, and your other stakeholders will all have an interest in seeing your company weather whatever unpredictable storm might come your way.

ACTION: Practice these six strategies.
Measuring Productivity

Rethinking the old number’s game.

by Brady Mick

In business, numbers rule—for good reason: As a universal language, everyone understands numbers are ideal for measuring productivity. By calculating how much time and money is required to produce and sell products, numbers provide companies with clarity of expected employee efficiency and effective success. While this approach works for goods-producing industries, it often leaves service-based industries scratching their heads and wondering: “What is the gold standard for measuring success when the time-money-product equation is not complete? What replaces widgets?”

To redesign the time-money-product equation to reflect productivity in a shifting market, a change in mindset needs to occur. This begins by recognizing the surge in service-based industries. Only then can additional variables such as employee process, shared ideas, and innovation be considered viable components in determining success. Overall, a paradigm shift requires stepping outside the traditional measurement box and adopting a broader sense of the cognitive determination of how quality, value, and social dynamics create the pictures and stories of successful outcomes.

Changing our business adherence from traditional measurement demands an intentional and concentative refocus from employee output to employee contribution. Calculations become based on the time, money, and widget numeric changing landscape of work requires the child must form both a quantity and a value determination. Add three hungry classmates to the mix and the child must determine who gets the wormy apple; social dynamics come into play.

Regardless of how numbers are perceived, we tend to use them for measuring end-product success. Several schools of thought have reinforced this idea. Statistician W. Edwards Deming’s 14 Points for Management has been used for 30 years as a tool designed to boost product manufacturing. Yet, as champion of the quality measure of business productivity, Deming’s point 11 states, Eliminate numerical goals. Deming recognized that quality was derailed by reliance on numeric goals entirely. This phenomenon remains prevalent today.

Another example is Motorola’s Six Sigma Quality Process, which stresses improving product quality to increase output. Six Sigma’s focus on removing defects from any production process has propelled companies like General Electric to higher productivity. Yet, as businesses today seek to solve the complicated problems of people, they are realizing that innovative ideation actually relies on the existence of defects in the systems thinking process to have breakthrough moments. The process of people at work today is in conflict with the quality processes that defined the recent past.

Changing Workplace

To appreciate the need for updating the productivity equation for service-based businesses, it helps to understand the changing business landscape. In 1959, Peter Drucker coined the term knowledge worker to describe the shift from physical to conceptual labor. He fore-saw an emerging service-based economy. Today, we see a surge in service-based businesses, and employment in service jobs will increase 14 percent.

This shift from an objective (goods-producing) to subjective (service-performing) economy has altered many practices, including hiring. With efficiency no longer the only measurement of employee productivity, service-based companies are hiring people who are adept at ideation, innovation, critical thinking, and collaborating for team initiatives. With people relying more on each other’s strengths, the traditional manager/employee (parent/child) relationship has become a barrier to service-performing productivity. With the lines between employee and management blurring, these new dynamics factor into the productivity equation.

Leaders must now create a balance between hard numbers and the quality/value/social dynamics measures found in all creative and knowledge work, reflected in service-based markets. The resulting productivity matrix combines people-focused qualities to provide a complete portrayal of employee value and performance measurement.

Asking the right questions is central to adopting new behaviors toward balancing over reliance on pure numeric measurement. Businesses that measure productivity including people dynamics, are attuned to the resonance of the cultural impact on business results.

Service-based businesses need to re-evaluate their motivation for success. Clarifying people-based motivation is essential to future productivity gains.

When employees are valued and their strengths respected, they tend to work more diligently for the company. This leads to an affirming environment, which ultimately entices more qualified employees and reduces turnover. As a result, the company can offer people better service and products.

As companies continue to do more knowledge work and team innovation based on collaboration, the metrics must expand past the limitation of numbers. The way business redifines success will lead to more positive results and more realistic expectations of company value.

ACTION: Use new ways to measure productivity.

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LE
Lead Fearlessly

_A lesson from the Zen leader._

by Ginny Whitelaw

There’s buzz today around what Zen can bring to leaders, whether it’s the secret lessons of Steve Jobs, or a popular meditation program. Can Zen bring us quiet amid the noise? Or calm in the thick of turbulence? Truly, Zen doesn’t bring us anything. Rather, it strips away our stuck points, gets us out of our own way, whereby we realize the Zen leader in us.

Zen leadership is the freeing up of our boundless nature, beyond the fears of the ego. Getting out of our way is what moves us from barely managing to leading fearlessly. You get in your own way when you get stuck on an opinion; become volatile, anxious, or worried about pleasing; insist on being the center of attention; or any of the other ways leaders derail. It means looking out for ‘I’, being shortsighted and selfish, thinking only I can do this job, I need credit. I want this promotion, I am right. It’s all I, I, I.

When you introduce Zen into this picture, things improve markedly. You might think this is because the core practice of Zen—meditation—reduces stress and improves agility, self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, positivity, cognitive performance, and conflict management. But these are the symptomatic reasons. The way Zen really helps leaders is by cutting the grasp of ego (I), freeing you to lead fearlessly.

The ego and its fears are like a body and its shadow. We come with a hierarchy of needs (Maslow). It’s natural for the ego to have fears around those needs not getting met, for example, not being safe, loved, powerful, or good enough. But if we get stuck in the fear, we act in ways to get our needs met, which makes it all about me. Only I can do this. I’m right. I want credit. I want this person to like me. I’m not safe if I’m not making a million dollars. Normally we deal with our fears by trying to ignore them, distracting ourselves, jumping into action (whether it’s useful or not), blaming others, or manipulating them to get what we want.

_How can you be free of your fears?_ By recognizing the needs that fuel them and meeting those needs _just enough_—just as you would temper eating to a healthy level. Greed can make you overdo it. Greed and fear are intertwined, for greed is just the fear that I won’t have, do, or be enough. And the ego that has that fear is but a small subset of our whole, self. If we’re snagged by the fear, we mistake our self for that small being. But if we flip that around, become the fear—get so close to it that it loses its leverage—an instant sense of spaciousness opens up wherein we find the power to act.

You can do the flips of The Zen Leader by taking these three steps:

1. **See into the mirror:** When you feel stuck or a difficulty is happening _out there_—a difficult situation or relationship, for example, look inside to inquire what it is related to “in here.” How are you playing into it? When else in your life has something like this happened?

2. **Find the root:** Name the fear: What might happen? What might you not be enough? The fears listed above (e.g., not safe enough, loved enough, etc.) are a good starting place.

3. **Claim your power:** For each fear identified, move into it and meet the need that fuels it _just enough_. From that place, declare what value you can add. For example, if a difficult colleague relationship makes me fear that I’m not likeable, a standing-on-my-fear declaration might be, “I have enough other people in my life who like me. I will help this person be successful, whether she ends up liking me or not.” Or if my fear is not being good enough to handle a conflict, my statement might be, “I am good just enough to be real and present in the conflict and let tempers fall where they may.”

By moving into the fear, not being greedy, and declaring what value you can add regardless, you _claim your power_.

As you practice these steps—one fear at a time—you experience freedom and see beyond the edges of ego. And when you free up your own fears, you can take away the fears of others. By getting out of your own way, you have much more energy for the visions you manifest and those whom you serve.

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**ACTION:** Practice these three steps.

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Engaged Is a Verb

_as well as an adjective._

by George “Skip” Casey

We often assume a happy employee is an engaged employee and that by conducting certain activities managers/leaders can produce more happy and engaged employees, using the word engaged as an adjective, describing the employee’s response to the managers’ actions. Many activities are identified by surveys that ask people to rate how engaged and happy they are and how often their boss does xyz activity or offers abc benefits. Items that correlate highly with satisfaction are assumed to cause the engagement.

Yes, sound management practices—involvement in decision making, training, morale, open communications, meaningful recognition, equitable rewards, and rational procedures and policies—contribute to a motivating culture, but they are not magic beans to be planted and watered to harvest engaged employees.

One reason the term engaged is so popular is that it means different things to different people. As an adjective, engaged can mean involved in activity. As a verb, it can mean to attract and hold by influence or power or to pledge oneself; to promise or guarantee.

What’s missing is a sense that people engage with each other. Leadership is a relationship between the leader and those who chose to follow. Each leader defines engagement in a particular context, as does each employee, which contributes meaning to the relationship. Often the experiences and contexts differ. People may follow a leader in one context, but not in another.

If leaders see employees as engaged objects, they miss the point: Leadership is all about relationship. The leaders we need engage with employees to create productive, enduring, shared meaning and purpose that serve the common good.

Leaders who want employees to commit their whole self—head, heart, and hands—to the mission, must do the same. This is leadership of equity—encouraging self-expression, self-development, and accountability, and treating others with dignity.

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**ACTION:** Be engaged in leadership of equity.
Organizational Health

The last competitive advantage.

by Patrick Lencioni

A ll the competitive advantages—strategy, technology, finance, marketing—that we’ve pursued in the past are gone. The disciplines haven’t disappeared, but they have lost their power as meaningful competitive advantages, as real differentiators that can set your company apart. Why? Virtually every organization has access to the best thinking and practices on those topics. As information has become ubiquitous, it’s almost impossible to sustain an advantage based on intellectual ideas.

However, one simple, reliable and virtually free competitive advantage remains—organizational health.

Healthy organizations all but eliminate politics and confusion from their cultures. As a result, productivity and morale soar, and good people almost never leave. For those leaders who are a bit skeptical, rest assured that none of this is touchy-feely or soft. It is as tangible and practical as anything else—and even more important.

Even the smartest organization—one that masters strategy, finance, marketing, and technology—will eventually fail if it is unhealthy. But a healthy organization will find a way to succeed. Without politics and confusion, it will become smarter and tap into all of the intelligence and talent that it has.

So, why don’t more companies embrace organizational health and reap the benefits? For one, it requires real work and discipline, maintained over time. And, it’s not sophisticated or sexy—it doesn’t excite executives who seek a quick fix. Moreover, it’s hard to measure in a precise, accurate way. It impacts so many disparate areas of an enterprise that it’s challenging to isolate it as a single variable and quantify its singular impact on the bottom line.

Creating organizational health also requires courage. Leaders must confront themselves, their peers, and the dysfunction within their organization with an uncommon honesty and persistence—and walk straight into uncomfortable situations and address issues that prevent them from realizing the potential that eludes them.

Four Disciplines

To get healthy, leaders need to take four simple, but difficult, steps:

1. **Build a cohesive leadership team.** Get the leaders of the organization to behave in a functional, cohesive way. If the people responsible for running a team, department, or organization are behaving in dysfunctional ways, then that dysfunction will cascade down and prevent organizational health. And yes, there are concrete steps a leadership team can take to prevent this.

2. **Create clarity.** Ensure that the members of that leadership team are intellectually aligned around six simple but critical questions. Leaders need to be clear on topics such as why the organization exists and what is the most important priority for the next few months, and eliminate any gaps between them. Then people who work one, two or three levels below have complete clarity about what they should do to make the organization successful.

3. **Over-communicate clarity.** After the first two steps (behavioral and intellectual alignment), leaders can take the third step: over-communicating the answers to the six questions. Leaders of healthy organizations constantly repeat themselves and reinforce what is true and important. They err on the side of saying too much, rather than too little.

4. **Reinforce clarity.** Leaders use simple human systems to reinforce clarity in answering critical questions. They design any process that involves people—from hiring and firing to performance management and decision-making—in a custom way to support and emphasize the uniqueness of the organization.

Healthy organizations get better at the one activity that underpins everything they do—meetings. Without making a few simple changes to the way meetings happen, a healthy organization will struggle to maintain its health.

Healthy organizations rarely fail. When politics, ambiguity, dysfunction and confusion are reduced to a minimum, people are empowered to design products, serve customers, solve problems and help one another. Healthy organizations recover from setbacks, attract the best people, repel the others, and create exciting opportunities.

Employees are happier, the bottom line is stronger, and executives are at peace when they know they’ve fulfilled their most important responsibility—creating a culture of success.

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ACTION: Gain and maintain org health.

Bad to Worse

Management’s dilemma.

by Jim Burkett

W hy is management success so elusive and ineffective management so prevalent? Why do 38,000 U.S. businesses go bankrupt each year, and many more struggle? In turning around underperforming companies, I observe that management allows the wrong things to happen—problems then fester, persist, and multiply. If they go unrecognized, unaddressed, or unresolved, they erode competitiveness and erase profits, causing the business to fail.

Usually, the difficulty lies not in solving problems but in recognizing them. George Washington said: “Errors once discovered are more than half amended.” Amending problems makes the right things happen. But first the problems must be identified.

**Why don’t managers identify and understand problems?** The practice of management is made of simple disciplines: however, the practice of these disciplines is difficult. The difficulties accumulate and produce a friction or inertia causing them not to be practiced. Then managers stumble in frustration and failure as unidentified and unresolved problems persist.

**Management disciplines must be learned and practiced.** Management effectiveness is not innate—managers must acquire a practical knowledge of the disciplines so their skillful practice is made instinctive. This happens as managers recognize what the disciplines are, know how to use them, and systematically employ them. When practiced, the disciplines function as tools to extend management skill, allowing management to achieve more with them than they ever could do without them.

**The management disciplines are not practiced for three reasons:** 1) managers don’t know or neglect the seven learned disciplines of management effectiveness; 2) they don’t know how to skillfully use the disciplines and thus misuse them; and 3) the disciplines are not used systematically and practiced consistently.

**Seven learned disciplines make up the practice of management.**

1. **Planning.** Through this discipline, a plan, is born. The plan depicts the desired end or aim and specifies the
Leads with Honor

Do you have what it takes?

by Lee Ellis

Are you alarmed by the frequent ethical scandals in recent years? Ethical problems are just as prevalent on Main Street as Wall Street, as bookkeepers, purchasing agents, and owners violate the trust others place in them.

What is happening? Does anyone care about honorable leadership? What can you do about it? What have others done that might guide those of us who advocate character-based leadership?

Some of the best examples of leading with honor come from the POW camps of North Vietnam, an environment so hostile that we might expect to see many examples of self-centered, self-serving leadership. But when lives were on the line, these brave leaders chose honor rather than comfort, humiliation rather than cooperation with the enemy. Their courageous service shows us what is required to lead with honor. Let’s look at four lessons:

• Know yourself. The POWs’ leaders were experienced and strong yet compelled to be humble. The enemy used torture and isolation to try to break their will and force them to cooperate in making propaganda. They were vulnerable, stripped to their core; they could not pose or pretend they were something they were not. Fortunately, they were solid—healthy people with a strong character that enabled them to lead with honor through humiliation.

• Connect with your support team. In your struggle to lead with honor, don’t go it alone. That’s why the enemy tried to isolate the POWs in North Vietnam and why the POWs risked everything to keep the communication lines open. They relied on the encouragement of teammates. You can’t see every situation objectively. On tough choices, you need the perspective of a few key advisors to help you evaluate the situation and navigate treacherous waters ahead.

• Confront your doubts and fears. These take out more leaders than anything else, and they can be traced back to your identity—knowing who you are and being comfortable with yourself. Even the smartest, toughest, and best leaders face insecurities and fears.

The POW leaders were tough warriors. Commander Jim Stockdale endured frequent physical abuse and four years in solitary confinement; naturally, there were fears, but he did his duty and suffered the consequences. Great leaders learn into the pain of their fears to do what they know is right. Courage does not mean that you are not afraid, but that you do what is right when it feels scary or unnatural.

• Action: Practice these seven learned disciplines.


ACTION: Lead with honor in your organization.
Charismatic Leaders

Harness the power to create change.

by M. Alexander Kuhn

At some point, your life is altered by a Charismatic Leader. This person makes you believe anything is possible. No matter your skill or experience, success is the only option and you go above and beyond to achieve the goal. Many consider charisma to be essential for leadership. Others believe that charisma is a gift that few possess. In fact, one dictionary uses the words magic and divine in describing charisma.

But what if charisma was not a gift or innate ability, but a skill to be developed and refined as part of a leader’s repertoire. For charisma to be defined as a skill, there must be a step-by-step process to follow to improve charisma.

Charismatic leaders excel in three areas. By applying the three steps in each category, you’ll improve your charismatic leadership skills.

Area 1: Articulation

A key function of charismatic leadership is to articulate the message. Each word and phrase must create impact and stick with the listener.

1. Create a powerful statement. At a seminar, you likely retain 5 to 10 percent of the speaker’s information. So, you need to ensure your audience remembers a statement that is unique and powerful. Such statements tend to be outcome focused, targeted at the audience, and short. Jack Welch knew the power of a strong, short statement. “Be number one or two in your market.”

2. Apply a visual and detailed story. Everyone loves a great story. If you read a book before seeing the story in movie form, you likely enjoyed the book more. This is because before the movie, you painted a picture in your mind. As a charismatic leader, you use stories to paint a picture of the statement in people’s mind. The story can be from your life, another person’s experience, or even made up! The story must have a character we care about, a struggle they overcome, and a successful end that ties back to the original statement.

3. Use tone and inflection when speaking. You have your statement and story, now put emotion into each word by changing your tone and inflection. You thus engage the audience to follow you along the ups and downs of your statement and story. We’ve all heard speakers say, “This is exciting news.” Charismatic leaders don’t describe the emotion, the inflection and tone of their voice says it all. The best way to do this is to change your facial expression when speaking at that moment. If you are excited, your facial expression should be that of someone who is excited and happy.

Area 2: Branding

When I see a green Starbucks label on the white cup, I know I am receiving a quality cup of coffee. By developing a physical brand that is consistent, you become more recognizable and more charismatic in the eyes of the listener.

1. Be consistent in your attire and appearance. The first step in branding is to match your attire and appearance to that of your target audience. If you are Donald Trump, you are wearing the most expensive suit and are proud to have a unique hairstyle. Steve Jobs wore a black turtleneck with blue jeans. Develop a look that is consistent and easily recognizable by those who do and do not know you.

2. Maintain a healthy lifestyle. Not all charismatic leaders are fit/healthy; however, the top ones appear to lead a healthy lifestyle. You need not be a fitness machine (except in certain industries). The goal is branding yourself, and by staying in a similar shape during your career; your brand will stay intact and consistent over time.

3. Create an image of being larger than life and aura of confidence. When you speak in a group, do you put your hands in your pocket or cross your legs? These physical changes make you look smaller and weaker in the eyes of your audience. To become larger than life, stand on a stage above or below your audience. When in the room with employees or guests, stand tall with good posture, maintain eye contact, and use small hand gestures. This may include a small clap after hearing a funny story, or a strong handshake.

Area 3: Affection

Being a charismatic leader is developing respect and admiration from everyone, whether they agree or disagree with your position. To improve your charismatic leadership abilities, you need to strongly believe in your message. As you do, you become more charismatic in the eyes of your audience.

1. Truly caring about your position.

If you plan on selling the impossible, you first must ask if you truly and deeply care about your position. Whether you are religious, spiritual, or ethical, you must make a decision that is 100 percent devoted to the message you’ll preach. Most likely, you are already instilled with a value system that will help you make these decisions. When we think of charismatic leaders, we often think of priests/pastors. One reason they are charismatic is because they dedicate their lives to their religious beliefs. When you truly care about your position, your words become genuine, which makes your message believable.

2. Truly caring about making a difference.

Next, desire to make a difference. Many of us believe in the value of community service, yet, not everyone is an active member. Once you have a strong position, asking three questions will help you determine if you care about making a difference. Are you willing to give up your valuable time? Are you willing to sacrifice other areas of your life to achieve success? Are you confident your time will produce positive results? The stronger you answer yes to these three questions, you not only become believable, but genuine.

3. Truly caring about others’ perspective.

With a believable position and genuine decision to make a difference, learn to understand and appreciate all perspectives. By truly caring about others, you ask meaningful questions and desire to understand their decisions. Whether they fall inline with you or not, your ability to understand and appreciate others enables you to develop connection. Charismatic leaders don’t force their position on others—they connect so strongly and deeply that others desire to be on their side.

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M. Alexander Kuhn is a coach, consultant, and speaker on leadership enhancement, peak performance, and personal development. Visit www.KuhnSolutionsGroup.com or call 434-944-8179.

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