

LEADERSHIP Excellence

Warren Bennis



THE MAGAZINE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY

JULY 2010



Little Big Things

Ask Seven Questions

Uncommon Leadership

Do the Right Things

Harvey Mackay
Leadership
Consultant



“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

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VOL. 27 NO. 7 JULY 2010



Fleeting Sun

At the end of the day, leaders tend to become pensive, reflecting on events, wondering how, even in an abundant ecosystem, to scratch out a living and provide for office mates and offspring.

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Ecology of Leadership

Driving the abundance agenda.



by Ken Shelton

THE BP OIL SPILL IN THE GULF epitomizes corporate leaders' worst nightmare—daily media reports documenting the damage and destruction caused by your product in crude and rude form.

The BP.com site details the company's sub-sea, surface, offshore, shoreline and community response. *BP leaders* estimate that the cost of the response to date amounts to \$21 billion, including the cost of the spill response, containment, relief well drilling, grants to the Gulf states, claims paid, and federal costs. Of course, it is far too early to quantify other potential costs and liabilities associated with the incident.

Here we see, in bold profile, the *economy of ecology*. The *biology of ecology* deals with the relations between living organisms and their environment; the *sociology of ecology* refers to the relations between human cultures and material resources. But the *economy of ecology* demonstrates how an ecosystem is an interrelated community of constituents and how damages escalate when one member of the community crudely offends other members—quickly turning shared abundance into scarcity.

The husband and wife team of *Dave and Wendy Ulrich* not only make the argument for the *abundance agenda*—adding meaning, value, emotional energy, and hope—they model the positive synergy of the agenda.

And other voices in this issue of *Leadership Excellence* chime in on what it takes to create and maintain a healthy system.

Striking at the Roots

All leaders should take note of what was done at *Disney*, as reported in this issue by *Mark David Jones and J. Jeff Kober*. They addressed the question, *What do world-class businesses do that makes them extraordinary?* and concluded that the sustainable way to achieve extraordinary results is to establish a *unifying focus* that creates a comprehensive, full-integrated, and simple (not simplistic) approach. They started with the desired end result (*customer loyalty and long-term financial success*) and worked backwards until they captured *the root causes* of these universally desired outcomes.

Henry David Thoreau once wrote: "For every thousand hacking at the leaves of evil, there is one striking at the root." Likewise, for every thousand hacking at the leaves of leadership, few are striking at the roots. My job is to assure that the contributing authors to LE are among those few striking at the roots—roots such as *the prevailing paradigm* (Bacon); *strategy* (Blum); *inclusion* (Glaser); *change* (Goldsmith); *power* (Hagel); *discipline* (Lencioni); *confidence* (Mackay); *collaboration* (Meister); *ingenuity* (Perrin); *civility* (Peters); *integrity* (Philpot); *humility* (Rosen); *trust* (Hackman); *development* (Tobia); *perseverance* (Wheatley); *love* (Witt); and *style* (Zenger).

From Roots to Fruits



Wendy Ulrich

The *agriculture of leadership* suggests that *abundant and sustainable fruit and produce* are the natural results of leadership well applied. In business, no fruit is more desirable than *long-term financial success* (the *sustainability* "end in mind" of the Disney development quest).

Of course, to get from roots to fruits—to bridge the gap between strategy and execution, dream and delivery, idea and marketable innovation, magic and sustainable business model—you need *mastery of management*: people who care deeply about people, process, system, quality, procedure, product, production.

As every gardener (or *stewardship leader*) knows: Between the *delight of planting seeds* (conception) and the *delight in an abundant harvest* (delivery) are the daily maintenance duties. As *Tom Peters* suggests, those who do their duty well deserve to be thanked and treated with dignity and civility.

An Abundance of Leaders

I was present recently when one senior leader was retiring and being replaced by another within the organization. The president commented: "I am truly humbled to look out and see so many capable people who are *prepared to step up today*, if needed, into management and leadership positions."

Rather than feel threatened by this fact, this leader was comforted, knowing that the current viability and long-term sustainability of the organization were not in doubt.

Our mission is to make this the case in every Organization of Excellence. LE

Ken Shelton
Editor since 1984

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Executive Excellence Publishing:

Ken Shelton, CEO, Editor-in-Chief
John Courtright, Circulation Manager

Contributing Editors:

Chip Bell, Warren Bennis, Dianna Booher, Kevin Cashman, Marshall Goldsmith, Howard Guttman, Jim Kouzes, Jim Loehr, Tom Peters, Norm Smallwood

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151 Main Street
Saymour, CT 06483
1-800-243-4246
www.greenwichworkshop.com

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Ask Seven Questions

Promote abundance thinking.



by Dave and Wendy Ulrich

WE CAN'T PROMISE LEADERS AN EASY way to replace *deficit* with *abundance* thinking; however, we can offer them *seven questions* that drive the *abundance agenda*—make meaning, add value, create emotional energy, and foster hope at work. These questions apply to leaders at four levels: personal (*Am I finding abundance myself?*), interpersonal (*Do we have an abundant work team?*), organizational (*Are we fostering abundance here and with customers?*), and societal (*Can our industry or community help humanity?*).

Question 1. What am I known for? (*Identity*). A sense of abundance is fostered by a clear sense of who we are, what we believe in, and what we are good at. Leaders can shape an organizational identity and then help individuals use their personal strengths to foster that identity and succeed at work. Leaders can also shape organizational strengths (capabilities) to build an abundant identity or brand, turning external stakeholder expectations into internal corporate actions. The *abundant organization* (AO) helps leaders build both organizational strengths and the strengths of individual employees. Leaders in AOs recognize and build on strengths and use them to create value for stakeholders. The meaning we find from our strengths deepens as we build on our strengths and on strengths that strengthen others. **Principle 1: AOs build on strengths (capabilities) that strengthen others.**

Question 2. Where am I going? (*Purpose and Motivation*). *Abundance* emerges from a clear sense of what we're trying to achieve and why. Often employees' and employers' goals are at cross-purposes, resulting in frustration, under-performance, and cynicism. Employees who can meet personal goals at work remain motivated and engaged; those who can't go in a different direction. Work feels like an extension of private life when personal goals align with organization goals. As we own and

personalize the company mission, we find ways to impact societal problems. Citizenship efforts underscore values of stewardship and accountability that help employees see how their personal values align with corporate values to make a difference. Leaders in AOs focus on *profit and environmental sustainability*. Leaders who emphasize social contribution without creating value for customers and investors won't survive. While bankruptcy will reduce an organization's carbon footprint, it will also eliminate its ability to employ workers, make useful products, offer innovative solutions, and build communities. **Principle 2: Abundant organizations have purposes that sustain both social and fiscal responsibility and align individual motivation.**



3. Whom do I travel with? (*Relationships and Teamwork*). Our *sense of abundance* is enhanced by *meaningful relationships*. Increasing complexities require combining people with different skills into cohesive, high-performing teams (HPTs). Positive relationships enhance teamwork and make even difficult work more doable. Although teamwork is more complicated, it enables team members to reduce complexity by specializing. HPTs operate with clear purposes, good governance, positive relationships, and the ability to learn. In AOs, teams produce and perform their tasks well and engender a passion that enables creativity, focused energy, trusting connections, and mutual respect. HPTs come from high-relating people. When leaders help their people move beyond the superficialities of *getting along* to *struggling through conflict* so that they can understand one another's strengths and weaknesses, they can achieve the synergy that occurs in the best relationships and gain a competitive advantage. The

best leaders learn and model the skills of building good relationships at work. **Principle 3: AOs take work relationships beyond HPTs to high-relating teams.**

4. How do I build a positive work environment? (*Effective culture or setting*). *Abundance* thrives on *positive routines*. While bad habits thrive on isolation and shame, positive routines help us connect with ourselves and others. Leaders can create and sustain positive routines to foster effectiveness, efficiency, and connection. Leaders can either tolerate cynical, negative, and demeaning cultures, or encourage constructive, affirming, and uplifting cultures. Leaders shape these cultures through their words and deeds. These cultures replace *individual isolation* with *corporate connection*. Leaders who engender positive work environments promote good communication, development opportunities, and pleasant physical facilities to ensure a positive culture. Routines and patterns driven by deep values ground us in what and who matters most. *Positive routines create a positive culture that sustains productivity and fosters connection*. Checklists and routines that are chosen around core values and relationships lend predictability and stability. Flexible but consistent routines help us know ourselves and others while countering both the perfectionism and the unpredictability that block connection. **Principle 4: AOs create positive work cultures that affirm and connect people.**

5. What challenges interest me? (*Personalized contributions*). We can't imagine abundance in the absence of challenge. The *most engaged employees* are those whose work enables them to stretch while doing work they love and solving problems they care about. As leaders involve teams and individuals in enjoyable challenges, they engage hearts and minds. Different people find different work easy, energizing, and enjoyable and different problems meaningful. Leaders need to adapt broad challenges to individuals. Engagement grows when we work in a company with a vision, learn and grow, receive fair pay, work with people we like, and enjoy flexibility in the terms and conditions of work. AO leaders take employee *competence* and *commitment* to *contribution* that focuses not just on activity but on the meaningfulness of the activity. **Principle 5: Abundance occurs when leaders engage employees' skills (competence) and loyalty (commitment) and values (contribution).**

6. How do I respond to disposability and change? (*Growth, Learning and Resil-*

ience). Failure can be a powerful impetus to growth and learning. When we face change and take risks to work outside our comfort zone, resist defensiveness about mistakes, learn from failure, and keep trying, we become more resilient. Abundance is less about *getting things right* and more about *moving in the right direction*. Resilience reflects a positive outlook on work and shapes learning for the future (not lamenting the past). Resilience and learning principles challenge us to “repair, reuse, and recycle” people, products, and programs rather than tossing them. In recessions, leaders may need to reduce staff, drop products, and cut nonessential programs; hiring freezes and reduced budgets also mean we must work with whom and what we have. Abundance means we learn attitudes of resilience. *When we make do with what we have, we realize that what we have is actually enough.* **Principle 6: AOs use principles of growth, learning, and resilience to respond to change.**

7. What delights me? (*Civility and happiness*). Abundance thrives on simple pleasures. Sources of delight include laughing at ourselves, appreciating excellence, relishing beauty, being present in the moment, and having fun at work. When leaders encourage civility and delight in how work is done, they create a sense of abundance. Sources of delight are highly personal, depending on the personality of the leader and needs of employees. Leaders need to understand, respect, and learn from the perspectives of people of other races, genders, backgrounds, or training, replacing hostility with civility, sweetness, and delight. Sensitivity to such differences helps us bring pleasure and delight into the work. When money is tight, small and simple pleasures can have more impact on our sense of well-being than grand one-time gestures. **Principle 7: AOs attend to demographic diversity and to the diversity of what makes individuals feel happy, cared for, and excited about life.**

When leaders explore these questions, they help create AOs with higher commitment, better health, improved productivity and retention, a leadership brand that builds investor confidence, increased customer commitment, increased investor confidence in future earnings and higher market value, and improved community reputation, merited by stronger social responsibility. **LE**

Dave and Wendy Ulrich are co-authors of The Why of Work. Dave Ulrich is a business professor and management consultant (www.rbl.net). And Wendy is a psychologist. Visit www.whyofwork.com.

ACTION: Create an abundance organization.

Respect and Trust

Build a culture of accountability.



by David Witt

COLLEEN BARRETT, PAST president of Southwest Airlines, and Garry Ridge, president and CEO of WD-40 Company, have created close-knit, high-performing cultures by combining high expectations with a sense of caring that is unique in business.

Many leaders believe that focusing on *people* versus focusing on *performance* is an either/or decision. The belief is that you can't have both. Still, Southwest and WD-40 have done it. They've created a caring culture and industry-leading results year after year. How do they strike this perfect balance? It all begins in an important two-foot space—the distance between managers and their direct reports. By holding their managers accountable for creating a culture that features trust, respect, and accountability, they drive results and create a culture where people feel cared for.

To build that same spirit into your organization, follow three tips:

Take the time to connect. Find out more about your direct reports. Share more about yourself. Create a people-based connection.

Demonstrate trust. Trust is a key element in any relationship. Cultivate trust by being transparent in your thinking. Demonstrate trust by doing what you say you'll do. Show that you are consistent and can be relied upon.

Have high expectations. Expect a lot from your people and encourage them to expect a lot from you in return. When you set up a foundation of trust and respect, you can ask for more from your employees and hold them accountable for delivering on it.

Many managers and leaders today act as if the human element is unimportant. They don't take the time to build connections or demonstrate trust. But this short-cut comes back to haunt them when it's time to set goals and hold people accountable for achieving them. Without a relationship of trust in place, it's hard to ask people to give their best—and even more difficult to

have a conversation when performance falls short. *Don't let this happen.* Follow the example set by Southwest Airlines and WD-40. Practice trust and respect-based relationships that get results and create a winning, people-based spirit.

Bringing LUV to Leadership

Is *love* the key to success? In their book, *Lead with LUV: A Different Way to Create Real Success*, Ken Blanchard and Colleen Barrett make a convincing case. Their basic formula is simple: Southwest succeeds because it treats employees with respect, practices *The Golden Rule*, and loves people for who they are. In return, the company asks employees to treat customers in a similar manner.

This approach enables Southwest's leaders to expect more—and receive more—from their people than other airlines. Since employees know that leadership is on their side, leaders can confidently challenge and hold people accountable for meeting expectations. This business version of *tough love* only works when employees know you care.

When you start practicing *leadership love*, apply these three tips:

1. Communicate your mission and vision. Barrett explains that at Southwest, they are first in the customer service business—they just happen to express that service by providing airline transportation.

2. Define the values that will guide behavior. At Southwest, values start with safety and practicing

the golden rule—treating people as you would like to be treated. Three additional values of Warrior Spirit, Servant's Heart, and a Fun-LUVing Attitude guide employee behaviors daily.

3. Combine caring with high expectations. Leaders at Southwest treat their people with respect, strive to bring out their best, and love their people for who they are. In return, employees are expected to buy into the company's mission, and to practice the company's values with each other and customers.

What's the level of leadership love where you work? Do employees know that leaders truly care about them? The *luv element* at Southwest has created long-term success and a fun-loving culture in a challenging industry. What could it do for you? **LE**

David Witt is the Program Director for The Ken Blanchard Companies. Ken Blanchard and Colleen Barrett are co-authors of Lead with LUV. Visit www.kenblanchard.com.

ACTION: Take time to connect with people.



Leadership 2020

Start preparing people now.



by Jeanne C. Meister and Karie Willyerd

INNOVATIVE NEW STYLES OF LEADERSHIP—ones that are collaborative, personalized, technologically-adept and culturally-attuned—will be required in the 2020 workplace. “Sometime over the next decade your company will be challenged to change in ways for which it has no precedent,” notes Gary Hamel. Leaders need to be rooted in the present while looking toward the future, to meet the demands of a constantly-shifting and global marketplace.

Demographic shifts with regard to the age, race and gender of employees across the world mean that the 2020 workplace will not look like the 2010 workplace. In the United States, this will result in a workplace that is half female, 63 percent Caucasian (down from 82 percent in 2010), and nearly one-third Hispanic. But the biggest change the 2020 workplace will present is the most age-diverse workplace: by 2020 there will be five generations in the workplace at once. From Traditionalists born prior to 1946, to members of Generation 2020, who will begin entering the workplace in 2015, leaders will be charged with meeting the wide range of expectations held by each generation.

2020 workplace has gone global.

Leaders will encounter a marketplace more globally dispersed. Many companies are embracing globalization: partnering with companies from other countries, setting up global headquarters outside the United States, and adjusting their cultures to support their global reach. This means changing work hours, cultural-awareness training, team-leading with offshore counterparts, and an increasing reliance on social and digital technologies.

2020 workplace has gone digital.

Increased access to global markets is facilitated by rapid growth in the use of social technologies and networks. Virtual worlds, teleconferencing, blogs and vlogs, Skype, instant messaging, wikis,

social networks, chat boards, and video- and document-sharing sites allow for instant transfer of information, feedback, and decision-making. This real-time *information transparency* has democratized information—and changed what is required of the 2020 leader.

Leaders can't afford to merely function in supervisory roles. They must act as a hub for rapidly cycling activity in all areas of the company. Effective leaders live in the day-to-day environment of operational execution and thus must be integrated with management. As one study notes, *leadership involves leading from within, fitting into the group, and exerting influence—not imposing views.* Thus leadership skills are more useful when developed holistically, not in isolation.

How do these trends create change in the future leader? The characteristics of what it took to be a great leader in the past—*integrity, customer commitment, and vision*—will be retained, says Marshall Goldsmith. However, “five different qualities will be added: *global leadership, cross-cultural appreciation,*



technology savvy, building alliances and partnerships, and sharing leadership.”

According to a poll of over 2,000 trans-generational employees, the most desired skills in a leader include those mentioned by Goldsmith as well as *prioritizing the development of people and anticipating the future and building institutional capability* to address it.

Five Key Skills of 2020 Leaders

We have integrated these factors into these five key skills:

1. Collaborative mindset. We need leaders who have a *collaborative mindset*, work comfortably in a networked environment, cooperate with competitors, deal across cultures, and navigate complex markets. Since employees list *honest feedback as one of the most desired skills in a leader*, new protocols are being created to provide a continuous stream of real time and instant feedback. New forms of mentoring include group-, reverse-, micro- and anonymous mentoring. *Team-based leadership options*, such as collaborative councils and boards, facilitate cross-team functional-

ity. Leaders seek and consider input from all employees. 2020 leaders will factor in the input of various thoughts, experiences, and skills and deploy them for fast, productive results.

2. Team development. Younger generations consider work an integral part of their lives. Thus, they need their job to be fulfilling and hold the promise of advancement. On top of the open feedback loop they want from bosses, they also want career guidance, relevant training, learning opportunities, and to feel part of a community. A leader with a collaborative mind-set spends time on building rapport and trust. Focusing on the individual will be the key to retaining employees, as the 2020 leader forges teams that rise to the challenge of networked leading.

3. Tech savvy. The 2020 leader needs to be conversant in the technology of the newest generation of workers. They will need to use social technologies as a means of keeping all the out-lying components of the company in a real-time, two-way information loop. Social media tools invite transparency, inclusion, and instant communication to address changing market situations. Beyond being digitally confident, they must seek new means of *revolutionizing* their company's technical proficiency.

4. Globally-focused and culturally-attuned. As companies become more global, they're exposed to how the *economic policies and governance strategies* of countries affect other nations. Leaders need to be competent at working with foreign governments. Since their employees will be working with people from different cultures, they'll need to leverage the unique skills of all and create cohesion. Our intertwined destinies call for leaders who can build companies that focus on the triple bottom line: people, planet, and profits.

5. Future-facing. Scanning the marketplace, identifying trends, and building new skill-sets will ensure long-term viability and sustainability. *Competitiveness* requires *innovation proliferation*—creating a culture of ongoing invention, creative thinking, and multiple-horizon thinking—the ability to rationalize the distribution of resources and effort across the present and future to balance incremental and bold moves.

Leaders who can take collaboration to a new level in building their teams, and who can use the digital tools to their greatest effect, will direct their companies into a dynamic future. LE

Jeanne C Meister and Karie Willyerd are co-authors of *The 2020 Workplace* (Harper Business). Visit www.the2020workplace.com.

ACTION: Develop the five key skills.

Whole Leadership

Use your head, heart, and guts.



by Stacey Philpot

LEADING IS TOUGH. Rising customer expectations regarding cost and value, increasing competitive pressures, and greater uncertainty are testing even the strongest businesses.

Leaders face new and higher standards. Operational excellence and flawless execution have become prerequisites. Today's leaders are required to execute in a way that ensures profit and growth while anticipating future competitive threats and innovating new business models to generate revenue *in an unknown future*.

Leaders must achieve these results not with a broad base of support provided by their place in a hierarchy; instead they are required to informally collaborate with a myriad of people, groups and external stakeholders—many of whom hold opposing agendas. Disengaged employees, high turnover, dysfunctional teams, and global differences add to the mix. And increasing cynicism towards, and distrust of, organizations makes leading today a seemingly impossible task.

In such a complex condition, what type of leader, *if any*, can help organizations recover, flourish, and grow?

We believe that leaders who are well developed in three key areas are more likely to succeed. As colleagues David Dotlich, Peter Cairo and Stephen Rhine-smith note: "To be a leader today, you need to use your head, demonstrate heart, and act with guts." This whole leadership model was first defined by them in their book, *Head, Heart and Guts*.

Whole leaders use their head to think like their customers, balance strategic and operational thinking and re-invent their profit models. They provide clear purpose, direction and strategy.

Whole leaders use their heart to understand, work with, and develop others. They recognize the importance of balancing people's individual needs with business requirements. They are curious about and empathic toward their people. These skills enable them to lead diverse groups and build *strategic internal and external relationships*.

Whole leaders demonstrate guts by acting in line with clearly articulated values. They possess integrity, take an active stance to manage conflict, and courageously drive change.

Partial Leadership

Most leaders tend to rely heavily on one aspect. In times of difficulty, their preferred attribute is exaggerated, resulting in certain pitfalls.

People who lead primarily with their heads tend to analyze a situation, absorb the data, and decide among rational alternatives. But under stress, they're likely to: intimidate people with their intellect; confuse people by complicating issues; dominate conversations;



change directions without being transparent; fail to connect with people; drive for performance without inspiring other values, thereby creating a cynical workforce; fail to develop leadership bench strength; and let their need to be "the smartest person in the room" lead to *content* leadership rather than *context* leadership.

People who lead with their hearts are viewed as *natural people developers*. They easily build collaborative relationships and informal networks. They possess emotional maturity, the capacity to create trust, and the flexibility to work with a range of people. But under stress, their natural preferences can cause them to: let compassion get in the way of the tough decisions; mistake empathy for agreement; be unable to understand and manage personal derailers; act too slowly to ease the pain; fail to address and manage conflicts; allow others to take advantage of them; fail to stand up for what they believe in; and fail to override their desire to be liked by everyone.

People who lead with their guts are often quick to act or challenge the status quo. They are tenacious, persistent, and relentless. They make tough but necessary decisions regarding everything from people to product lines, and they act in accordance with their values even when doing so is not expedient or popular. However, their preferences can cause them to: see everything as black or white; confuse stubbornness with focused persistence; be unwilling to be challenged; intimidate others; fail to solicit the views of others; act without anticipating consequences; and ignore facts that conflict with their opinions.

Short term, leaders who focus on one of the three attributes can succeed. We all know people who use their analytical and logical expertise to run a business. We've likely worked for someone who inspired us through their personal connectivity and ability to obtain loyalty or their tendency to make bold moves. But it is the rare individual who values all three and can shift back and forth, depending upon the situation.

Organizations tend to have more leaders who are strategic, analytical, and purposeful—fewer leaders who *have emotional intelligence, develop talent, and courageously do the right thing*.

One-dimensional leaders are more likely to become overwhelmed by complexity and uncertainty. Today's focus on profitability, growth *and* value requires leaders who possess a more complete set of qualities, acknowledge the importance of all three attributes, and partner with those who have different or complementary preferences.

What Type of Leader Are You?

To become a whole leader, you need to know which attributes you rely on most and those that you under-utilize.

Recall a past challenge and consider your first response: Did you analyze the situation, reach out to stakeholders, or brashly pursue a change agenda?

To understand how your preferences align (or fail to align) with the culture to which you belong, identify the preferences that are rewarded or undervalued in the culture and ask: What traits do your leaders have in common? Does your performance-review process emphasize *head, heart* or *guts* attributes?

Turbulence represents a *new normal*. We need resilient leaders who fight for what they believe in to *revitalize, reinvent, and differentiate their organizations*. **LE**

Stacey Philpot is a partner at Oliver Wyman Leadership Development. She creates custom leadership solutions to accelerate the development of leadership as a source of value and competitive advantage. Email stacey.philpot@oliverwyman.com.

ACTION: Use your head, heart, and guts as needed.

Little Big Things

Rack up billions in revenue.



by Tom Peters

FOR ME, THE ICING ON the cake, the motivational engine, the final flash of realization about the *eternal basics* of leadership can be traced to a slim volume I read in 2008, at the height of the endless Vermont winter, while on vacation in New Zealand.

The book, by David Stewart, is titled *The Summer of 1787*. It is an account of the writing of the U.S. Constitution, a landmark in history, which occurred during a mercilessly hot and humid summer in a hopelessly stuffy room in Philadelphia. I underscore the heat and humidity, because it was one of those “little BIG things” that had an enormous impact on the final outcome.

The delegates would often break early to escape the heat, turning over the writing of some key clauses to a subcommittee that would retire to a Philly pub to do their work. Members rarely included grandees such as Ben Franklin or James Madison; instead, they were *delegates with minimal qualifications* who had gotten the mostly unwanted *little BIG* assignment.

The tawdry affairs chronicled in Stewart’s book reminded me of the decisive role in *anything* of numerous “little BIG things”—like showing up, with a draft document in tow, sticking around from the opening to the closing bell, and bringing the right temperament to the party. One powerful delegate played an inconsequential role because he was deemed by his peers to be a “windbag” and given to “bombast”; hence, *his mates refused to accept him as a subcommittee member*. They wanted to be done and go home.

Economists and strategy gurus just don’t get this mundane “soft” stuff. So I’ve tried to produce what emphasizes the *stuff that really matters* in getting things done—the “little BIG things.”

For example, in Manchester, England, I had a lengthy exchange with a technically trained chap who ran an engineering-services company. The topic was “the power of expressed appreciation”—saying “Thank you” with regularity to acknowledge the value of the recipient, maid or manager.

Like many others, especially men, my engineer-leader not only doesn’t say those two words often, but actually doesn’t know how. His question to me was from the heart—and a brave heart indeed to broach this emotional subject in public. The point is, he “got it.” He “got” the point of the *power* of this gesture, regularized. Our fine discussion underscored the fact that there is a *genuine discipline*, worthy of an engineer’s careful consideration, associated with this “mundane” activity. If he does enter “appreciation” into his canon, that alone will have made my 6,000-mile round-trip worthwhile.

Ideas like *conscientiously showing appreciation* are matchless signs of humanity—and the practice makes you a better person, one behaving decently in a hurried and harried world. But,



such acts also result in *dramatically improved organizational effectiveness*—and goals more readily achieved; whether those goals involve profitability or provision of human services.

Acts of appreciation are masterful, even peerless, ways of enthusing staff, partner and client alike, greasing the way to rapid implementation. “Soft is hard” is pragmatic—and, *effectively implemented, makes the bottom line blossom!*

I argue that *the stuff that matters* is the likes of *intensive and engaged listening and showing appreciation of the work and wisdom of any and all others*. And you can *study and practice* these full-blown disciplines and become, say, a full-fledged “professional listener.” I suggest that *effective strategic listening* is perhaps *the key*, to lasting, “strategic” customer relationships—and top-flight professional mastery of listening beats, on the power scale, quantitative marketing analysis tools every time.

Yes, civility, thoughtfulness, and manners matter: Excellence is rarely

reached without the ability to take the needs of others into consideration. My Virginia-born mom was a stickler’s stickler on manners (that *Southern thing!*) I bridled, naturally, but in these last 40+ years I’ve learned just how far a “thank you” and a “yes, sir” and a “yes, ma’am” can take you—at age 67, I still “yes, sir/ma’am” 19-year-old 7-Eleven clerks in inner cities. Civility was George Washington’s forte and *competitive advantage*, and it’s worked for me in far more humble settings.

What little things might you do today to make a big difference in your business? For example, you might put flowers around the office—and let it be known that *the flower budget is unlimited*. In the next 24 hours, send flowers to four people who have supported you—including, and this is mandatory, at least one person in another function.

My long interest in “little things” with enormous impact was rekindled after reading *Nudge* by Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein and *Sway* by Ori Brafman and Rom Brafman. The central idea of these books is powerfully simple: “*Little*” things can make enormous—staggering—BIG differences. For example, Frito-Lay adds new bag sizes, suffers no cannibalization of current offerings, and ends up creating new (and enormous) markets—racking up, eventually, *billions* in revenues.

The toughest part of this message is that you need an “attitude” that this sort of thing *can* work, and a willingness to screw around until you get “it” (*whatever is under consideration*) more or less right—and keep fine-tuning it.

So, let me nudge you to be a nudge. Make nudgery the centerpiece of your change strategy. The *Art of Nudgery* is amenable to rapid experimentation; fast and inexpensive to implement; is a huge multiplier; requires an *Attitude*; does not require a *power position* from which to launch experiments—this is mostly stuff below the radar that most people don’t care about on the front end.

Become a *Professional Nudgist!* Even with *small things*, the words *study, practice, and professional* are key.

Work diligently on some “little BIG things” that determine career success, customer contentment, employee engagement, and business profitability!

At every team meeting, have each honored invitee (an employee upon whom Excellence wholly depends) present “a little thing” that could become a Big Thing. Select one, and then implement it. LE

Tom Peters is president of The Tom Peters Company. Visit www.TomPeters.com.

ACTION: Present a little BIG thing this week.

Change You or It

The Zen of managing yourself.



by Marshall Goldsmith and Patricia Wheeler

IT'S A TOUGH, CHANGING WORLD. AND when your competition is already responding by working harder and longer, you need to separate yourself from the throng. Getting and keeping *Mojo*, the positive spirit toward what you are doing now that starts from the inside and radiates to the outside, is no longer optional.

The good news: *you're still in control of your life and destiny. You have the power to create positive change.* This begs the question: What can you change? *You can change either You or It.*

By *You*, I mean how you think, how you feel, what you say—basically all about you that's under your control.

It refers to any influencing factors in your life that are *not you*. It could be another individual, a group of people, a job, a place, a relationship, or the results of a choice you made in the past that needs undoing. It is everything that's *not You*.

It's a clear binary. Yet you can easily make the wrong choice. You try to change *It* when you should be changing a thing about *You*—and vice versa.

For example, some people hate their companies. It's interesting to watch how people deal with this emotion.

- *Some people do nothing.* They stoically *endure* the situation. But *endurance* is not an option if your aim is to elevate your *Mojo*. When you choose the status quo, you elect to stay miserable rather than try to be happy.

- *Some people find another job.* They leave the offending employer and seek a new environment. It's risky, but it's changing *It* in its purest form.

- *Some people alter their attitude toward the company.* They assess why they feel as they do and try to find a new way to interact with colleagues. For example, you may resent your boss calling you about business on nights and weekends. You may believe this is rude and invasive. You may choose to change yourself and accept

that he sees no other options; and you may rethink what you regard as *working hours*. That's changing *You*—making peace with the situation.

- *Some people positively and proactively change their work environment.* They treat decision-makers respectfully, yet they challenge them on important issues. They respect final decisions that won't change, yet impact many decisions that are in progress.

- *Many people do none of the above.* Instead they whine and complain about their employers, as if voicing their resentment will magically change the company. What are the odds of that happening? Answer: slim to none.

Changing *You* is not inherently preferable to changing *It* (or vice versa). The best approach depends on the situation. Once you're aware of this *You*



or *It* dichotomy, you see manifestations everywhere and realize its effect on *Mojo*. In all situations, *Mojo* is a function of the relationship between who you are (*You*) and your situation (*It*). If you cannot change *You*, *Mojo* is influenced by your relationship to *It*. If you cannot change *It*, *Mojo* is influenced by your relationship to *You*. It's your choice—and your life.

If your *Mojo* is suffering, no one can make the “you vs. it” decision for you. So, become clear on your own values and make a thoughtful decision.

Zen of Managing Yourself

Most of us work best under moderate pressure. Elite athletes expect it, and thrive on the energy they feel when they're up close and personal with their audience and competition. But what happens when the stress level rises? How can you perform at your best under changing conditions?

What erodes your performance most?

Perhaps the biggest “derailer” is the tendency to inwardly resist what you don't like. Maybe you hate feeling dominated by your boss, hate managing whiny employees, or dread presenting your ideas to the CEO or board. You hate experiencing your most uncomfortable feelings—the anxiety, dread, or irritation that accompanies these situations that radiates outward. So you avoid or deny these feelings. And often this avoidance triggers your “default settings” and trips you up.

So what are you to do? You have two options: either *change yourself* or *change your situation*. You can change yourself by deliberately practicing skills that build self-knowledge and effective performance under stress.

Studying how elite athletes achieve *peak performance* provides some clues. Sports psychologists who work with these athletes take cues from *Zen Buddhism* and train clients in the practice *mindfulness*. Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn defines *mindfulness* as “paying attention in a specific way: on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.”

When you're stressed, you revert to a basic *fight/flight/freeze* stance. Your nervous system then presses the panic button, which tenses your muscles, constricts your blood vessels, and pours on the adrenaline. Blood flow to your brain is restricted, leading to a narrowing of attention; you stop being strategic and innovative and become reactive. This constitutes a *mind-less*, not *mind-ful*, response to pressure.

Since pressure increases in leadership positions, what can you do?

First, you need to accept your natural reactions—your irritations and anxieties. Notice and observe your experience rather than react to it. It's not the feelings that trip you up as much as your efforts to control them.

For example, if you must have a vital conversation with your irritable boss, you need to practice before the event. Then, as you mindfully go to the conversation, take a few deep, slow breaths and focus on behaving productively, regardless of the behavior of your boss. Experience your thoughts during the encounter, without denying them or letting them control you.

Mindfulness takes practice, but helps you become a more effective leader. **LE**

Marshall Goldsmith is author of *Mojo*, *Succession*, and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*. Visit www.marshallgoldsmith.com. Patricia Wheeler is an executive and team coach and Managing Partner in the Levin Group. E-mail Patricia@TheLevinGroup.com or call 404-377-9408.

ACTION: Use a little Zen to develop your *mojo*.

Lead With Customers

And achieve consistent excellence.



by Mark David Jones and J. Jeff Kober

WHAT DO WORLD-CLASS BUSINESSES do that makes them extraordinary? A review of *world-class companies* (WCCs) reveals this insight: The strategy to achieving extraordinary results is to *establish a unifying focus that creates a comprehensive, full-integrated, and simple (not simplistic) approach.*

Many books describe the formula for customer loyalty and long-term success. During Disney's transformation efforts (early 1990s), our goal was to sort through all the fads and discover the path to consistent world-class excellence. We started with the desired end result (*customer loyalty and long-term financial success*) and identified what causes that outcome.

We find there are *four components*:

- **Leadership excellence.** Leaders are catalysts for action, improvement, and excellence. Leaders who communicate a compelling vision, involve employees, and effectively manage resources create the fertile corporate culture.
- **Employee engagement.** Once leaders create a culture that nurtures excellence, employees become committed and passionate about achieving goals.
- **Customer satisfaction.** Highly satisfied external customers provide the revenue to fulfill the mission. Engaged customers become brand advocates.
- **Operational and financial results.** Achieving results is the ultimate goal. To achieve better outcomes, you must focus on improving the first three steps.

In this formula—the *Chain Reaction of Excellence*—we see that the gap between you as a leader and the financial results that you crave consists of your culture and your brand. The quality of your employee engagement and customer experience determines your success. World-class leaders realize that the way to optimize results is to view them *both* as customers: the traditional external customers and the employees as internal customers. Once this shift in think-

ing occurs, serving both becomes simpler because the same (singular) tools can be used to exceed the expectations of both groups of customers.

World Class Excellence Model

If you ask most managers or leaders to take on new responsibilities, you'll likely hear them say *my plate is full*. This is why most companies chronically operate in *crisis management mode* and endure one failed *program of the month* initiative after another. When new tasks are added to full workloads, initiatives not deemed *critical* fade away.

Rather than compete with waves of changes, world-class businesses make the non-negotiable elements of the operation—the *plate*. Establishing this framework enables them to identify freedom within the priorities, so peo-



ple can make the situational choices that *exceed their customer's experience.*

Our *World Class Excellence Model* showcases how to align and unify culture and brand for *optimal operational integrity—and superior financial results.* One component is the six-part operational delivery system used to implement service to internal and external customers. We call this system *the Six Ps.*

Promise: When people don't get what they expect, they get emotional, since their expectations are violated. If the experience isn't *as good as promised*, they're upset. For the external brand, this takes the form of *marketing and sales*—often mistakenly disconnected from *operations*. For the internal culture, the Promise is *how the company is promoted when hiring.* WCCs take integrity personally.

The next four P's illustrate how service is delivered.

People: The people focused on the external brand are those on the front

line directly interacting with your customers—the *Front of the House*. Those who don't have direct contact with customers support those on the front line. They're often considered the *Heart of the House*. WCCs know "the front line equals the bottom line." Everyone engages their customers at all times.

Place: Every service experience happens *someplace*—even if that *place* is virtual (website.) For traditional customer service location, *the place* involves all five of the customers' senses. For the external brand, this means your "onstage" areas that external customers can sense. For your internal culture, this is the backstage areas that only employees access. In both cases, know that *everything communicates.* The question is: "Are you communicating what you want?" How does the customer domain add value to their experience?

Process: Policies and procedures are also ways that businesses provide service. External customers experience rules that govern the order and flow of securing the product or service. Internally, the process concerns employee guidelines and how they're supported (or not) in conducting their job. World-class companies know that you must "make it easy to do business with you."

Product (or service): Externally, the goods you offer impact your brand, just as they impact your culture internally. Ultimately, your product must effectively reflect your culture and brand to add optimal value to your customer. Successful companies know that you must provide the best of what your customer really wants.

The experience created by these five P's is then compared to the sixth P:

Price: Finally, cost of the experience—both tangible and intangible—must be considered. The true cost goes far beyond the money—it includes the time and effort "paid" as well. For the internal customer (employee), salary, commute, responsibility, respect, and prestige all come into play. WCCs know the *true costs ultimately determine the value in the minds of your customer.*

The ultimate goal is to have the People (P2), Place (P3), Process (P4), and Product (P5) live up to the Promise (P1), and be well worth the Price (P6).

Unless all six P's are considered, the experience of your external and internal customers will not exceed their expectations; hence, there will be no loyalty, or *sustainable competitive edge.* LE

Mark David Jones and J. Jeff Kober, founders of World Class Benchmarking, are co-authors of *Lead With Your Customer* (ASTD Press). Visit www.LeadWithYourCustomer.com.

ACTION: Align your culture and brand.

Leadership 101: Fit or Fail

Assess your fit with culture and paradigm.



by Terry R. Bacon

LEADERS NEED TO reflect the cultural norms of their organizations in their words and actions. Being misaligned with the culture is a recipe for failure.

SAS, the business software firm, has a strong employee-centric culture. CEO Jim Goodnight said, “Our culture is like the human immune system—if we bring a stranger into a leadership position, it attacks.” People whose values and beliefs are incongruent with the values and beliefs of their organization are *misfits*—and will either leave on their own or be forced out.

Prevailing Leadership Paradigm

For executives, the key element of culture is the prevailing leadership paradigm (PLP)—the shared set of values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices about how leaders there lead. In command-and-control organizations, the PLP includes a pyramid of hierarchical management authority, clear lines of communication and control, rewards and punishments for managers to motivate workers, and the presumption that managers have the right to command those reporting to them. In more collaborative organizations, the PLP might include shared or shifting decision-making authority, self-organizing networks of communication and work flow, self-managing teams, and the presumption that, while managers may use authority to command, they might better use influence. Looking at diverse organizations, we see that PLPs vary widely.

The PLP often reflects the founder’s leadership beliefs and operating style, which become codified in the culture, much as Herb Kelleher’s leadership style and practices became “the Southwest Airlines way” and were reinforced in the employee-run culture committee. Or the PLP may reflect the views and behaviors of a dominant CEO like Michael Eisner at Disney. I use the word *prevailing* to indicate that: 1) the leadership paradigm may evolve over time or abruptly shift with a new, strong leader who

imposes a new way; and 2) some leaders may have a different view of leadership but that view won’t prevail unless it evolves into the cultural norm for how leadership is practiced there.

The PLP usually reflects the prevailing view about which stakeholders the organization principally serves—shareholders, customers, or employees. Shareholder value drove corporate strategy and leadership emphasis for many years, but SAS and companies like it are driven by employee satisfaction, while Ritz-Carlton and Nordstrom are driven by meeting customer needs and creating a differentiating experience. The drive to meet the needs of its principal stakeholders determines which behaviors are rewarded and, hence, which leader-



ship behaviors are paramount. Those behaviors are codified in leadership competency models, rewarded in performance appraisals, and syndicated in training and development programs, which is how they become part of the prevailing leadership paradigm.

When you join any organization, you need to assess your fit with the culture. Unless you’re being hired to turn around an ailing company that needs a radical cultural transformation, your success will depend largely on how well you fit the culture or how quickly you can adapt to it. And a vital part of your fit is how closely aligned you are with the PLP.

You can still bring your own leadership principles to the table or introduce new ideas where you think they’re needed, but when you jump on a galloping horse, it’s easier to lead the horse another way if you first ride in the direction the horse is headed.

Practice Checking In

In their relationship with their boss, employees want seven things: 1) feeling trusted, 2) feeling challenged, 3) feeling good about themselves, 4) feeling competent and skilled, 5) being appreciated for who they are and what they do, 6) feeling excited about what they’re doing, and 7) feeling involved in activities that matter to them.

If you are a boss, you can meet many of these needs simply by practicing *management by walking around (MBWA)*—an unstructured approach to *hands-on, direct participation in the work-related affairs of your people*. In MBWA practice, you spend much time making informal visits to work areas and listening to employees. You collect qualitative information, listen to suggestions and complaints, and keep a finger on the pulse.

This is not complicated. You simply visit everyone, stay positive and genuine, make sure it’s not all business.

You may not see amazing results right away, but periodically checking in with people delivers many benefits:

First, it opens lines of communication. It signals that you are available, that you are interested in them, that you care about what they think.

It closes the distance and may make people feel comfortable enough with you to share what they really think. It can enable you to uncover problems you hadn’t known about and identify solutions from the people on the front line who are often better at identifying operational issues than managers who don’t have to deal with those issues daily. So it facilitates early and often better problem solving.

And checking in with employees tends to increase their engagement—and your engagement.

High touch means high care, and when people know you care about them and their work, they tend to be more engaged, committed, and loyal.

When you check in with people, I suggest that you ask: *How are you doing? or How’s it going?* to initiate the dialogue. *What’s working well and what isn’t? How could we be doing a better job? Producing a better product? Improving quality? Reducing errors or rework?*

Next you might ask these open-ended challenge and opportunity questions: *What do you think are the biggest challenges facing us now? What would you do about them? What opportunities do we have right now? What should we be doing to capitalize on them?*

Occasionally, you might ask questions about their job and career: *Do you*

feel challenged in your job? What would make it more challenging and interesting? Where would you like to be in two years? What would you like to be doing? Do you think you're qualified for that position/role now? What would you need to do to be qualified? You may need to come back later after they've had time to think about an answer.

Finally, ask questions about how you are doing as the person's boss: *How am I doing? or What could I be doing better as a boss?* Whether you hear good things or bad things, knowing is better than not knowing. Then at least you can do something about it. How do you get honesty in response? You have to listen to criticism and can't be defensive when you hear it.

Initially, people will be reluctant to say how they really feel—unless they genuinely feel good about you and your management style. But if they see that you are genuine and that you won't punish people for telling the truth, they will open up and tell you what isn't working for them.

Add a Scale Question

I always add a "scale" question: *On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best, how would you rate communication in our division? Scale questions force people to calibrate their response, and no matter how they answer, you have a good follow-up question: [If they give a 10] I'm glad to hear that. What do you think we're doing especially well? Is there any room for improvement? What would we have to do to reach a 10?*

You can ask such questions with individuals or small groups. In groups, the questions about career aspirations and satisfaction with you and your management style are less likely to work because people may be reluctant to speak up or not contradict what others have said. But small groups are excellent forums for talking about the work process.

Open and Candid Dialogue

When you check in with employees frequently, you establish open and candid dialogue that enables you to improve your relationships with your employees, more fully engage them, facilitate problem solving and quality improvement, and create a culture where feedback is a normal and safe occurrence. There is no downside to this simple leadership practice. **LE**

Terry R. Bacon is Scholar in Residence, Korn/Ferry Institute. Visit www.terrybacon.com.

ACTION: Check in often to create open dialogue.

Perseverance

It's a life-saving skill.



by Margaret Wheatley

WHEN AS A LEADER you experience any circumstance or emotion that threatens your capacity to stay and to keep going, I encourage you to consult with my small book, *Perseverance*, designed to be carried with you and consulted as needed.

I wrote this book for two reasons. First, I'm worried about many of us. We're working diligently to change things in our organizations, our nations, our planet. We work diligently to create change, to make progress, to create organizations where more people can discover their talents, learn and grow, and feel fully human.

But the problems are proliferating. They are more complex, impenetrable, overwhelming. Exhaustion and occasional despair are common experiences. And so is the intensifying climate of fear and aggression, not just in the greater world, but in our meetings, in our relationships with each other, amongst team members.

How do we keep going, and remain grounded and steadfast? How do we not lose our way, or get swept away by the negative currents that swirl around us? How do we become people who can persevere?

Second, I felt compelled to explore perseverance when I received a text message from a friend who is CEO of a non-profit working along the Gulf Coast. I first met her in post-Katrina New Orleans, then worked with her as other hurricanes battered that region. One morning, in the midst of another heartbreaking, frustrating meeting, she sent me this message: "Everyday I have to make a choice not to give up."

That single text contains the essence of what I've learned about perseverance. It's a choice, a discipline, a practice. It's a day-to-day decision to stay, even when we're confronted with failure, anger, criticism, insanity. We don't persevere accidentally. We have to stay mindful of the circumstances and people that provoke us, to the situations that rob us of our strength, that

exhaust us. It's at these times when we're provoked, tired, overwhelmed, that we have to make a choice. Sometimes the choice is to give up, to realize we can't be helpful here, or that this isn't the right time. Sometimes the choice is to notice our own behaviors, how we've become aggressive, demanding, angry. Sometimes the choice is to notice the goodness of the people around us, the joy that's available even in the worst circumstances simply because we're in this together.

Perseverance is a common human trait; otherwise, none of us would be here. All of us come from families and cultures where people have persevered through much worse circumstances than our current challenges. However, we're also people who've been counseled to discover our passion, to fuel our work with hope and maintain our motivation because we're making a difference. We believe we need to feel inspired and focused all the time—we ask each other "What are you most passionate about these days?"

But perseverance is very different from passion. Perseverance is a choice. It's not a simple one-time choice, it's a daily one. There's never a final decision.

Our first "yes"—filled with energy and enthusiasm—brought us here, but it's of no use as the waters rise and the turbulence increases. By the time we're surrounded by obstacles and opposition, by aggression and mean-spiritedness, our initial choice has no meaning (if we can even remember that optimistic moment).

This is as it should be. Having to make a choice every day keeps us alert and present. Do I have the resources, internal and external, to keep going? Can I deal with what's in front of me right now? Do I have any patience left? Is there a way through this mess?

These critical questions require a momentary pause, a little reflection. Rather than just striking out or being reactive to a bad day, we offer ourselves freedom. Do I continue, or do I give up? Even a brief pause creates the space for freedom. We're not trapped by circumstances or fatigue. We give ourselves a moment to look clearly at the current situation. And then we make a conscious choice—every day.**LE**

Margaret Wheatley is the author of a new book Perseverance (Berrett-Koehler). Visit www.margaretwheatley.com.

ACTION: Exercise perseverance in daily pressures.

Leadership Ecosystem

Construct social networks using the power of pull.



by John Hagel III, John Seely Brown, and Lang Davison

LEADERS ARE INFUSED WITH A DESIRE TO step up their game—for themselves and their companies. But how do leaders get better faster? They construct a network that allows them to *pull* relevant people and capabilities toward them, rather than wait for those things to magically drift their way.

Social networks constructed in the right way can provide leaders with an unparalleled opportunity to achieve their potential. By attracting people who can help them, while helping others in return, leaders can grow a powerful *leadership ecosystem*.

Lesson 1: Expand Dunbar's number. It's not *what* you know, it's *who* you know. Most of us have put our networks to use at one time or another. Maybe we've called a close friend, relative, or business associate to help with an unexpected problem. Or we've met a friend of a friend or been introduced to someone to advance our career or business prospects.

Building a leadership ecosystem is radically different. This type of network is based less on *mutual* interest—what each person can get—and more on *mutual interests*—what each participant is passionate about and interested in. These mutual passions and interests create an environment in which people can move with considerable speed to meet unexpected challenges when they arise.

Anthropologists believe that human beings have a limit to the number of people with whom they can maintain real-life relationships. Beyond 150 people—aka *Dunbar's Number*—it's simply too much for any one person to juggle. The problem is that those 150 relationships (fewer for the more introverted or bigger for the more extroverted among us) don't connect us to enough people to solve enough challenges.

Digital technologies, however, enable our social networks to “scale”—to get

bigger with little extra effort and still prove useful. In some ways, they become more useful than ever. With digital tools—such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn—Dunbar's Number may not go away, but it likely becomes much bigger. *For the first time, we can increase our number of social relationships.*

The core of our networks—the relatively few people with whom we maintain deep and rich relationships—will always remain important. But in using the social technologies now available, we discover that they can extend the edges of our social networks more effectively than ever and explore these edges in ways that were simply not feasible before.

As the number of people we can connect with expands, our ability to pull from that network the resources



and people we require to address unexpected needs expands along with it. Using the tools and platforms emerging today, you can now find a person in a remote part of the world who just happens to have the knowledge or expertise we need.

Lesson 2: Use the power of pull. Pull platforms like leadership ecosystems are emerging as a response to growing uncertainty. Instead of dealing with uncertainty through tighter control, pull platforms seek to expand creativity in dealing with immediate needs. Pull platforms help people come together and innovate in response to unanticipated events, drawing upon an array of specialized and distributed resources.

Rather than constrain the resources available to people, pull platforms expand the choices available while helping people to find the resources most relevant to them. Rather than dictate the actions that people must take, pull platforms provide people with the tools and resources (including

connections to other people) required for them to take initiative and creatively address opportunities as they arise.

Pull platforms also have the potential to transform talent development across the firm. How, exactly, does talent get better faster? Workers develop not through formal training programs but by trying new things, by experimenting with what they do in their jobs and how they do it, and by tackling real problems with other talented people with different backgrounds and skills. Talented employees develop best by participating in talent networks—the largely invisible matrix structures, made up of knowledge flows, that run within firms and, with increasing frequency, between and across them.

Building leadership ecosystems is a way to operationalize talent networks at both the individual and firm levels.

Lesson 3: Master the strength of weak ties. In the past, our networks were largely given to us as a byproduct of our other experiences. Most people lived in the place they were born throughout their lives. Our group of friends and associates was primarily driven by this initial accident of birth and key life experiences—where we went to school, where we worked, and where we worshipped. Networks tended to be heavily concentrated in local geographies, they were small, and didn't change much over time.

Geography still matters, but we have more flexibility in shaping our social networks to connect to the most relevant edges in our areas of passion and in our professions. We can craft a social network that pulls in people who share our interests, and reach out to more and more people with those interests to enlarge the network.

Social networks encompass both strong ties and weak ties. The strong ties—the deepest and richest relationships we have—provide us with the most day-to-day support. But it is the weak ties in our network—the relationships that are much less well developed, and that seem peripheral in our daily lives—that most often provide us with opportunities to connect with people who are active in the emerging arenas that are most relevant to our passions and professions.

In times of growing pressure, leaders tend to focus even more on strong ties, seeking support and reinforcement from people they know and trust the most. *Leaders should resist this temptation.* Uncertain times signal that our strong ties are insufficient to support us.

We need to shift our focus in social

networks from strong to weak ties. It can take time to inventory those weak ties and identify the people who have the greatest potential to introduce us to emerging challenges and opportunities. But, we need to take the initiative and reach out to these people, communicate their areas of interest, and invite them to help us meet others who share these interests on relevant edges.

The edges of our social networks represent the weak ties that connect us to people who can provide us with access to new insights, experiences, and capabilities that provoke us to improve our own game.

Grow a Leadership Ecosystem

1. Leaders need to listen deeply to understand another person's needs and interests. Then they can creatively think about ways to connect that person with others in their network who might help tackle those needs/interests.

2. Leaders should define interesting and promising initiatives that could be pursued jointly, both to motivate people to build deeper relationships and provide a context for building shared understanding, trust, and insight.

3. When people realize that *you genuinely want to help them become better at what they are doing*, trust is built in ways that pay off. What could have been a short-term transaction becomes a *sustained relationship*, yielding value to all.

Six Questions to Ask

We're moving into a world in which becoming a better leader is a lifelong endeavor. As you build a leadership ecosystem, ask these six key questions:

- Can you identify the 10 smartest or most accomplished people in your industry, market, or area of professional passion, regardless of where they live?
- How many of these people do you now know?
- If you know them, have you built a sustainable trust-based relationship?
- To what extent have you used that relationship to find ways for both sides to get better faster?
- To how many of these people do you feel comfortable reaching out and mobilizing in a new initiative related to your shared passions and interests?
- For these 10 people, how effectively are you using social technologies to increase your mutual awareness of each other's activities? LE

John Hagel III, John Seely Brown, and Lang Davison of the Deloitte Center for the Edge are authors of *The Power of Pull (Basic Books)*, *The Only Sustainable Edge*, *Out of the Box*, *Net Worth*, and *Net Gain*. Visit www.thepowerofpull.com.

ACTION: Grow your leadership ecosystem.

Remodeling Leaders

It's not just business anymore.



by Craig Perrin

WOBBLING MARKETS make it clear that in most industries—notably automotive, banking and real estate—*leaders have blown it*. Meanwhile, we ask, “How can leaders escape this mess and avoid a similar future mess?”

Our study offers a fresh answer: There is more to business than business savvy. Obsessively focused on the numbers, leaders forget five other *zones of leadership*, buckets of best practices vital to success—and to the ecosphere.

Three core questions guided our study and survey of leaders: *What are the key challenges for leaders today? How have leaders changed to keep pace? and What skills and strategies still remain vital?*

Our search revealed 42 leadership practices grouped in six zones. These

can help leaders address the symptoms and causes of today's economic ennui.

1. **Reflection.** Effective leaders assess their motives, beliefs, attitudes and actions, asking, “How can I ensure my blind spots don't cause poor decisions?” Leaders must: take responsibility for their mistakes; seek knowledge to make sense of the big picture; examine what role they play in the challenges they face; treat failure as a chance to learn and grow; reflect on their performance; consider opinions that differ from their own; and speak frankly with others to learn from them and build trust.

2. **Society.** Leaders with integrity apply principles such as *fairness, respect, and the greater good* to balance individual and group well-being. To succeed, leaders must: act ethically to serve the larger good, not just to obey the law; encourage others to take socially responsible action; challenge what they consider unethical decisions and actions; take action to benefit others, not just themselves; recognize and reward others based on merit, not on politics; make fair decisions, even if they negatively impact themselves; and take steps to reduce environmental harm.

3. **Diversity.** Here, leaders respect and leverage such basic differences as



gender, ethnicity, age, nationality, and beliefs. In this zone, leaders: strive to meet the needs of customers representing other cultures; encourage collaboration among people from different groups; display sensitivity in managing across cultural boundaries; collaborate well with people different from themselves; effectively lead groups made up of very diverse people; learn about the practices of other cultures; and manage virtual teams with explicit customer-centric goals and practices.

4. **Ingenuity.** Today's leaders help create a climate for innovation; develop a *shared picture* of a positive future; develop themselves to improve group capabilities; solve real-world problems by thinking clearly and engaging others; tell stories to motivate others toward strategic goals; create a culture of innovation; and promote speed, flexibility, and innovation.

5. **People.** Strong leaders *connect with others* to earn commitment, inspire effort, and improve communication. In this zone, leaders: read emotions and respond; adapt to the needs of different groups; help others resolve issues of work-life balance; inspire the trust of

customers and colleagues; minimize the negative impact of decisions and actions; maintain a cross-functional task network; and communicate well with customers and colleagues.

6. **Business.** Savvy leaders develop strategies, make and execute plans, and guide efforts toward predicted results. In this zone, leaders: adapt quickly to shifting conditions; manage costs; make the business competitive; promote business results; manage customer acquisition, retention, and lifetime value; and add clarity to corporate vision and values.

Leading today requires due attention, as conditions demand, to six big-picture zones, spelled out in specific practices, that undergird a collective effort to make the numbers.

Through the lens of the *leadership-zone model*, managers are competent primarily in one zone: *Business*. Leaders must do these things too, but they also demonstrate ability in five other zones.

Balancing six zones is a daunting task. Even so, increased awareness can help you recognize blind spots, make trade-offs, devise new strategies, and adjust strategies to the sober realities. LE

Craig Perrin is Director of Solution Development for AchieveGlobal. Visit www.achieveglobal.com.

ACTION: Develop capability in six zones.

Discipline or Spontaneity?

Take the both/and approach.



by Patrick Lencioni

I AM ABSOLUTELY CONVINCED that a key to success in business (and life) is discipline.

I am also convinced that one of the most important keys to success in business (and life) is spontaneity.

And, I am convinced that one of the greatest sources of stress in business and life is feeling guilty about not being disciplined or spontaneous enough, depending on your personality.

As a naturally spontaneous, creative (disorganized) individual, I am constantly down on myself for not being more disciplined in just about every aspect of my work life. That includes how I manage my daily schedule, respond to e-mail and manage my employees. My mantra could be, “think how much better I’d be if I could only avoid distractions, adhere to an agenda, resist bright, shiny objects. . . .” This usually shows up at home too, and includes everything from finances and food to parenting and prayer.

On the other hand, when I decide to go on one of my semi-annual discipline jags, I begin to lose my passion for work and I’m reminded that I am fed by having the freedom to be spontaneous and creative.

Some leaders are the opposite. They work with extraordinary discipline, rarely, if ever, forgetting about a meeting, letting an important e-mail message sit in their in-box for more than eight hours without a response, or blowing off a one-on-one meeting to take a call from an old friend. And yet, I’ve come to realize, with relief, that these people often feel guilty when they see other successful leaders who live by the seats of their pants and seem to have richer, less predictable and more exciting work lives.

And so they might try a week of spontaneity, throwing caution to the wind. (“Today I’m going to ignore my e-mail, call an unplanned brainstorming meeting, and maybe even take my staff to the movies!”) Of course, this only creates unbearable



stress for them, eventually driving them back to the comfort of a regular schedule and a predictable work life. But, like me, they’re still left to confront the recurring guilt about their inability to be more spontaneous, or in my case, disciplined.

The big question is, *are we doomed to spend the rest of our lives lamenting our lack of discipline/spontaneity, and wondering how much more effective we could be if only. . . ?* Maybe not.

The first step is not changing the way we work, but crushing much of the guilt that we allow ourselves to feel. The truth is, some leaders and managers are just better when they are spontaneous and unpredictable, responding to opportunities as they arise regardless of the schedule. And others flourish within a more structured, disciplined setting. The key is realizing which is true, explaining that to the people you lead, and then accepting most of the unpleasant consequences that come with it, knowing that you can’t have both.

The second step, unfortunately, is about changing the way we work. But just a little. The fact is, I really should be more disciplined because it would make my creative, spontaneous gifts more effective and enjoyable. But I need to pick a *few* parts of my world where adding more discipline wouldn’t hinder my ability to be who I really am. For instance, I can certainly afford to show up on time for staff meetings and review my schedule regularly without limiting my ability to be creative and

spontaneous in any meaningful way.

And for my disciplined friends, they do need to embrace spontaneity more, allowing their meetings to veer from the agenda and carving out bigger chunks of time for brainstorming and unstructured strategizing. But there’s no good reason to ditch their diligence about important communication or toss their daily regimen out the window.

Once you take on those few areas, let the rest go. And when your lack of discipline or spontaneity bites you in the butt (and it certainly will), you might as well celebrate it since *that’s what makes you the leaders that you are.*

Hey, maybe someone out there with discipline could teach me how to improve in that area. And in return, maybe I can take your staff to the movies. **LE**

Patrick Lencioni is CEO of the Table Group and author of *Getting Naked*. Email gettingnaked@tablegroup.com.

ACTION: *Take the both/and approach.*

Uncommon Leadership

It has common traits.



by Harvey Mackay

FOLLOW THE LEADER IS A game we learned as kids. We would follow whoever was in front of the line all over the neighborhood. When it was finally your turn to be the leader, you tried to prove your worthiness, at least until everyone got tired of the game.

Not much changes, except the geography, as we grow up. Leadership is a major factor in our success: can we convince our associates that we have the right stuff to lead? Or will they get tired of the game and find other jobs?

Some people are born leaders; they just know what needs to be done and how to motivate others to do it. If you don’t fall in that category, I have good news: *Leadership can be learned!* You can become a better leader by learning and applying important lessons from every experience and position.

While my leadership skills far outweigh my cooking ability, I invite all leaders to *try this recipe*: Have all ingredients at body temperature. Sift intelligence, ambition, and understanding together. Mix cooperation, initiative, and open-mindedness until dissolved. Add gradually ability, tactfulness and responsibility. Stir in positive attitude and judgment. Beat in patience until smooth. Blend all ingredients well. Sprinkle liberally with cheerfulness and bake in oven of determination. When absorbed thoroughly, cool and spread with kindness and common sense. It’s a long list of ingredients, but *great leadership won’t happen if any of those items are missing.*

I love to study leaders and the different ways they lead. If there ever was a need for great leadership, that time is now. When the going gets rough, the real leaders shine. Consider the challenges that faced these leaders.

The military presents many opportunities to observe leaders in action. For example, President and General *Dwight Eisenhower* used a simple device to illustrate the art of leadership. Laying a piece of string on a table, he’d show how you could easily pull it in any direction. “However, try and push it,” he cautioned, “and it won’t go anywhere. It’s just that way when it

comes to leading people.”

The *Duke of Wellington*, the British military leader who defeated *Napoleon* at Waterloo, was a great commander but a difficult man to serve under. He was a perfectionist and very demanding, who rarely complimented his subordinates. In retirement, Wellington was asked by a visitor what he would do differently if he had his life to live over again. The old Duke thought for a moment and then said, “I’d give people I worked with more praise.”

Famous general and Macedonian king *Alexander the Great* led by example. As he led an army across the desert, a soldier came to him, knelt down, and offered him a helmet filled with precious water. “Is there enough there for 10,000 men?” asked Alexander. When the soldier said no, Alexander poured the water out on the desert sands, refusing to take even a sip.

My friend *Marilyn Carlson Nelson*, Chairman of Carlson Companies, wrote in her book *How We Lead Matters*, “The fact is that being a leader in any field requires discipline, effort, and yes, sacrifice. It can be all-consuming. And during that time, life may not have much balance. It’s been said, ‘If you can’t ride two horses at the same time, you should get out of the circus.’ A circus is an apt analogy for the swirl of demands placed on leaders at the top.”

Leaders are not always popular. Former U.S. Secretary of State *Colin Powell* wrote in his book, *My American Journey*, “You cannot let the mission suffer, or make the majority pay to spare the feelings of an individual. I kept a saying on my desk at the Pentagon that made the point succinctly if inelegantly: ‘Being responsible sometimes means pissing people off.’”

Ken Blanchard told me, “The key to successful leadership is *influence*, not authority.” “Leaders have to keep their organizations focused on the mission,” says *Meg Whitman*, former CEO of eBay. “That sounds easy, but it can be very challenging in today’s competitive and ever-changing business environment. Leaders also have to motivate potential partners to join them.”

Leadership guru *Warren Bennis* spent years researching leaders. He wrote in *Why Leaders Can’t Lead*: “Leaders do the right thing; managers do things right. Both roles are crucial, but differ profoundly. I often observe people in top positions doing the wrong thing well.” LE

Harvey Mackay is the author of the bestsellers *Swim With The Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive* and *Beware the Naked Man Who Offers You His Shirt*. Visit www.harveymackay.com.

ACTION: Learn and apply leadership lessons.

Gender Talks

Avoid discrimination suits.



by **Connie Glaser**

AS *Wal-Mart* LEARNED At a steep price, gender discrimination lawsuits mean serious business. The largest retailer and largest employer is the subject of the largest class-action lawsuit in history. The damage is expected to cost *Wal-Mart* billions.

In recent years, many corporations have learned the hard way that gender differences and conflict can create tremendous liability—such lawsuits are costing corporations big bucks.

Boeing agreed to pay \$72.5 million to settle a class-action lawsuit brought by female employees asserting that they were paid less than men and not promoted as quickly.

Wall Street giant *Morgan Stanley* negotiated a \$54 million settlement to head off a class-action suit that made similar allegations.

At *Dresdner Bank* in New York, six female employees filed a \$1.4 billion discrimination suit alleging that a female director was forced to leave a dinner celebrating the closing of a deal so male colleagues could go to a strip club. One female VP was told by male colleagues that young women were hired based on appearance because the men wanted *eye candy* in the office.

As women gain confidence from high-profile cases, claims are likely to surge. Certainly lawsuits are bad for morale—and for the bottom line.

Yet, this is not a one-sided dialogue. *Men have complaints too.* At Northern Arizona University, 40 white male professors were awarded \$1.4 million in raises and back pay in a discrimination suit. They argued the university had discriminated against them by giving raises of up to \$3,000 to minority and female professors, not to white men.

Indeed, reverse discrimination has become an issue for many men. Many express concern that women are being promoted ahead of them, based primarily on gender, not better qualifications. Many men claim that with the influx of women at higher levels, corporate norms have changed. But sel-



dom are the new policies or standards for behavior clarified and codified.

Gender differences are a fact of life—and a growing point of contention. And the consequences of turning a blind eye to them can be severe. Beyond risking expensive lawsuits, you risk losing sharp and seasoned employees.

Yet things don't have to be this way. Organizations can move beyond misunderstandings and perceptions of unfairness. *Gender Talk*, the communication that occurs daily between men and women, can be done openly to: create a culture where men and women want to work; enhance productivity; reduce conflict, miscommunication, and misunderstandings; and attract top talent (men and women) who will add value to your company.

I find that both genders are increasingly willing to collaborate. With new technologies—from Twitter to Facebook—everyone is talking about everything (albeit often behind management’s back). As a leader, you can pretend these conversations are not taking place—or lead the discussion, proactively structuring the *Gender Talk* and facilitating healthy communication on gender issues.

To avoid discrimination lawsuits, take five steps:

- 1. Educate your employees.** Conduct workshops to help them crack the gender code so they can recognize and appreciate similarities and differences in gender culture and perspectives.
- 2. Create a complaint hotline where workers can feel safe expressing their concerns.** Address each issue promptly, professionally, and properly.

- 3. Ensure that both men and women receive the respect** they deserve and the support they need to do their jobs.

- 4. Develop and review policies.** Ensure new hires and current employees know what’s permissible (and what’s not) and know the rules and regulations regarding sexual discrimination and harassment. Make sure your firm’s anti-harassment and equality-opportunity policies and procedures are clear and in writing in the *employee handbook*.

- 5. Examine your pay scales.** Be prepared to explain to workers (male and female) why they are being paid less than—or not promoted as quickly—as their “other-gender” colleague.

Facilitate collaborative *Gender Talk* and foster an inclusive team approach. LE

Connie Glaser is an expert on leadership and bridging gender gaps and author of *GenderTalk Works*. www.connieglaser.com

ACTION: Proactively lead the *Gender Talk*.

World's Best CEOs

What makes them so great?



by Robert Rosen

NOT ALL CEOs ARE created equal. Some are better leaders, superior stewards, and more respected role models. They drive their companies to success while other CEOs drive their companies into the ground. We hear about some of the worst CEOs—those whose greed or reckless behavior contribute to the economic crisis and erode public trust. But what do the best leaders have in common?

We've interviewed 300 CEOs and top executives in 40 countries over the past two decades to identify the key characteristics of the best leaders. Recently we revisited these interviews to identify the most relevant attributes. We looked at CEOs from companies with strong track records, high *Fortune* rankings, demonstrable growth, and inclusion in *most admired* lists—both during and after the CEO's tenure. Our findings reveal why some leaders shed light while others cast shadows.

Five Key Characteristics

The best CEOs share five attributes:

1. They are genuine. Warm and engaging, they're open about themselves and the business. They are forthright in assessing their strengths and shortcomings as individuals and leaders. They ask tough questions, listen deeply, discuss personal values, and admit they do not have all the answers. Their *authenticity*—apparent to all around them—fosters trust. When people know they can rely on their leaders to tell the truth, and can depend on their leaders to be transparent, they are more willing to be themselves, take risks, and stretch to their full potential. Clearly comfortable in their own skin, great CEOs are also interested in others, the first to acknowledge an employee's accomplishment, celebrate a team's success, and give credit where it is due. *Their caring, heartfelt acknowledgement fosters self-worth in people around them.*

2. They are comfortable with uncertainty. They understand the constant flux inherent in their job and business. They know that what worked yester-

day won't necessarily work tomorrow. Change brings opportunity. Uncertainty fuels the fires of creativity. *By expecting the unexpected, keeping an open mind, making learning a top priority, and detaching themselves from the status quo, these leaders turn the anxiety that accompanies change into productive energy for moving forward.* By understanding themselves, knowing what they can and can't control, and demonstrating compassion for what people are feeling, they create an adaptive culture—where resilience rules and balance reigns.

Great leaders are masters of balance. They live and lead in paradox, demonstrating seemingly opposing characteristics simultaneously. They're optimistic about possibilities while being realistic about what might actually work. They



impatiently push people to stretch beyond their current capabilities while creating a supportive work environment. They exude confidence while remaining humble enough to listen to, and learn from, others. By maintaining equilibrium, they generate the energy and focus to meet challenges and maximize growth and performance.

3. They are intensely focused on the human side of business. Great CEOs see people as the primary driver of the company's success—the heart and soul of the business. They believe in investing in people first, and see finances as the business's scorecard. By starting with *the human agenda*, and surrounding themselves with a mature, healthy executive team, these leaders set the stage for executing other agendas more effectively. Getting the people part right enables them to keep the business running smoothly, including R&D, knowledge development, manufacturing, and supply chain. Successful

operations, in turn, drive the ability to gain and retain customers, take products to market, and outperform the competition. And winning in the marketplace enables the company to access capital, generate cash flow and profits, and attain a reputable ROI.

The best CEOs view *the human agenda* as the leading indicator of their success. Acting on it requires that they rethink their priorities, recommit to company values, and rebuild the bond with employees that has been damaged by the highly publicized actions of a few CEOs. Only when these factors are addressed can companies hope to restore employee and consumer loyalty.

4. They are committed to growth. Top CEOs have a clear philosophy and model for growth. They understand their roles, and are keenly aware of what's worked in the past and what's needed in the future. Seeing themselves as *Chief Growth Officers*, they focus people's time and attention on the future, even as they speak candidly about issues at hand. They challenge the company to grow faster, and use a disciplined process to find and unleash other growth leaders. They encourage potential growth leaders to experiment, take bold steps, move fast, deepen relationships with customers, advance the company's value proposition, and build a sustainable growth culture.

5. They are obsessed with execution. The world's best leaders have a passionate desire to succeed and a plan to motivate, involve, align, and focus their people. They exude enthusiasm and confidence. Adept at creating the conditions that lead to commitment, clarity, and results, these leaders instill in people a keen desire to keep their agreements, fulfill their obligations, and produce quality products and services—day after day, year after year. Yet, great CEOs keep raising the bar. To engage all employees, they push decision-making authority down and empower people to think and act as if they were their own CEO. They ensure accountability—the bedrock of business performance—is clear and actionable. These measures enable them to manage risks and costs, and unleash revenues to maximize value creation.

Developing or strengthening these attributes is essential for leaders who seek to re-establish their covenant with a community of constituents. **LE**

Robert Rosen is the founder and CEO of Healthy Companies Intl., a management consulting and research firm dedicated to driving the CEO agenda. Visit www.healthycompanies.com. or email bob.rosen@healthycompanies.com.

ACTION: Learn from the best CEOs.

Lead Across Boundaries

Have adventures in the white spaces.



by Kevin D. Wilde

ONE YEAR AFTER THE merger between General Mills and Pillsbury in 2001, the collective leadership surveyed all employees to assess progress. They identified *nine critical capabilities and cultural areas* as indicators of success. While the new company was performing well in eight of the areas, the marks in *cross-boundary teamwork* were low.

Thus began our leadership adventures in white space. As much as you try to get roles and responsibilities correct and do everything to make the functions and the units work well, there is still *white space*—gaps between the chart drawings of formal responsibilities. *Leadership authority and actions inside the lines and boxes are clear, but many dynamics play out with informal space when authority isn't clear.*

To be a good leader, you have to lead in the white space. So, our challenge to build greater cross-boundary teamwork became clear. General Mills' senior leaders saw the potential impact of poor cross-boundary teamwork and commissioned a team to identify ways to address the challenge. The team made recommendations in four areas:

1. Engaging and enabling leaders. Actions to improve *cross-boundary teamwork* began at the next all-employee meeting. The CEO expressed his concerns and asked for help. He repeated his message for top officers as we launched a leadership development (LD) program. In one session, a leader said, "The term *cross-boundary* doesn't mean anything. We've got to connect it with a real business situation, result, or a performance goal." All participants received a 360-survey with specific items to profile their cross-boundary behavior and impact. Through personal feedback and coaching, leaders embraced the challenge of better teamwork. Momentum built as we cascaded the program to all officers, directors, and high-potential managers. We then applied the powerful concept of *leaders teaching leaders*. The strongest cross-boundary officers became core faculty for the director training; and the best

directors taught the managers. At each session, the inside faculty provided credibility and commitment to the topic of *cross-boundary leadership*, and the two-way conversations deepened our insight on what needed to be done.

2. Communicating with and reaching all employees. We created a series of communications projects to connect employees. Stories of cross-boundary efforts were highlighted through a new internal website and e-mail offering called *Champions Daily*. One story highlighted how teams shared best practices and common interests to improve results. Another effort addressed the inconsistency of employee meetings. All of our officers and directors were asked to hold quarterly meetings and to bring a cross-boundary guest. For example, sales might invite someone from the supply chain. This process



helped to knit the company together. At employee meetings, the CEO would bring this topic up again.

3. Aligning the HR systems. Improvement initiatives stall when HR systems become barriers. The leadership team assessed performance and talent management (PM/TM) to evaluate whether they supported the cross-boundary cause. The first action for better HR system alignment happened when leaders set annual performance objectives together. They identified their internal cross-boundary partners and compared and coordinated objectives before finalizing them. This process helped us to create a PM system that would work well across boundaries. The second action involved rewards and recognition. New categories of cross-business teamwork were created, and many examples of team achievements were highlighted. Leaders reinforced the new behaviors, and people responded. The third action involved

career-pathing. We formed a team to create more systematic HR plans to move people across functional boundaries. For example, great sales leaders were moved into high-profile marketing roles, and great engineering executives were placed into operations. By moving the best talent around, leaders in all functions built new connections.

4. Enabling cross-boundary learning. We launched a new learning program—*Brand Champions*—to extend beyond the old General Mills way or the old Pillsbury way of marketing and brand building. We trained over 1,000 leaders, creating classes where people learned together and developed relationships across boundaries. *Brand Champions* learning became a way to connect individuals and leverage all four change levers: LD, communication, HR system alignment, and learning.

About two-thirds of employees recognized progress on cross-boundary teamwork. We followed up with a case study and shared findings to keep the momentum going and demonstrate the best practice learning dimension of cross-boundary improvement. The leadership team was pleased to see the progress, the impact on business results, and the positive momentum.

Seven Key Principles

As we improved leadership in the white space, we learned seven lessons:

- **Listen to what your people are telling you.** After our first survey, we could have decided that doing eight of nine items well was fine. Instead, by listening, we understood the importance of cross-boundary teamwork for success.
- **Don't ignore the white spaces.** Don't stay within comfort zones, silos, borders, and org chart boxes. Yes, white space dynamics are uncomfortable, but there's huge value in tackling this area.
- **Use multiple levers.** We used *four levers* to approach cross-boundary team issues. If we'd only used HR systems, we would have limited our success.
- **Issues don't stand alone.** Cross-boundary misconnections link to other issues. Allowing weakness in this *leadership and cultural capability area* would impact other performance attributes.
- **Think from a customer's point of view.** When we thought about hungry families or wholesome, heartland meals, we could see how improving our internal issues could benefit the customer. Internal resources rally well when aligned with external missions.
- **Encourage a culture of humility.** When a company has a culture of humility *where people openly exchange*

ideas, change is easier than when people are possessive and siloed. Leadership and learning happens best when there is a hunger for a better way.

• **Don't declare success too soon.** In year three, we saw cross-boundary scores drop because expectations of great teamwork and leadership went up. So, we revisited the four change levers and added new energy and initiatives. In year four, scores rebounded. You need to be vigilant in improvement efforts to make long-term culture gains. Today, the new General Mills has a clear path toward a future of increasing cross-boundary teamwork.

Working With 'Those' People

Pulling a cohesive team together from different areas is challenging, as core career beliefs influence how people act. For example, most operations people believe that *anything can be repeated with the right process*. Most marketing and salespeople believe *"we can make a deal."* Technical people—engineers, scientists, finance, and legal folks—see the world as a problem to be solved. HR leaders believe *"we can help."* When leaders of different beliefs get together, sometimes we have chaos. We often organize learning events that reinforce silos, not break down barriers. It's more comfortable to stick with our own and complain about "those other people."

Training can break down internal barriers and provide an open atmosphere to explore differences and reach new understanding. I see three primary ways to modify learning programs to build *strong cross-functional bridges*:

• **Mixing groups.** Blend different groups together. Spending time together forges new relationships and provides a common language.

• **Mixing resources.** Broaden the resources used to provide learning. Bring in speakers from different parts of the company to enrich a single-function learning event. This doubles the learning. Also, material from one function, say Marketing, could be integrated into a Finance program.

• **Mixing the focus.** Action learning projects and simulations facilitate cross-boundary learning. Each leader learns how someone else sees the world, and how all functions contribute.

Every training program and learning event either reinforces boundaries or breaks them down. Building bridges leverages internal talent to better serve external customers. LE

Kevin D. Wilde is VP of Organization Effectiveness and CLO at General Mills. Visit www.generalmills.com.

ACTION: Improve cross-boundary teamwork.

Personal Strategy

Start taking five actions.



by Andrew Blum

STRATEGY AND EXECUTION don't occur in a vacuum. They require people to act in concert, remain in dialogue, and adapt as needed to reach a common, intended destination.

Yet in our practice at the intersection of strategy, leadership and culture, we often see even leading organizations fall short of efficient, effective, and sustained strategy execution. And while the particulars vary, depending on the business and sector dynamics, the root cause is often the same: individuals inside the organization are disconnected from its broader strategy. Or, individuals say they're fully connected to the strategy, but their actions or attitudes demonstrate that they are not.

As a leader you need to make strategy personal for everyone.

After all, people don't come to work because they want to advance corporate priorities presented to them via PowerPoint. And few are excited to execute against divisional or functional imperatives, even those that are big enough to generate headlines. No, people get up and get in because they are personally inspired to make a contribution to something that they believe in and believe they can personally, positively impact.

When we discuss this idea with CEOs, we see lots of head nods. Then we ask how to bring this personal connectedness to life. With this question in mind, I offer five tangible *How To's* to make your macro-strategy personal, so everyone takes meaningful, aligned action to support the broader cause:

1. Connect goals and strategies to context and direction. Ensure everyone knows *where the organization is coming from and where it aims to go*, as well as *what the road ahead looks like and what metrics or other outcomes will clearly indicate success*. It's not enough for people to say, *we understand and are aligned with these details*—the "we're aligned" expression is much abused. They also should be able to clearly articulate and answer questions about them.



2. Help people see themselves in the strategy. A strategy that does not resonate, connect, inspire or enlist a high level of personal engagement has little chance of success. On the other hand, if you and your management team invest the time and energy to help people see how they fit into the strategy—and this may require you to be very explicit about how individual and team responsibilities and expected outcomes directly support the broader aim—our experience tells us you will get much more out of them.

3. Ensure people understand "What's in it for me?" Make sure people understand what they as individual players will gain from organizational success. For example, achievement of the end goal could mean individuals will receive greater compensation, or the opportunity to take on motivating new challenges, or be able to save jobs that would otherwise be lost. Regardless of the payoff, the more tangible a picture you can convey, the more likely people will be engaged to pursue it.

4. Make big change incremental. You don't just "put a man on the moon" or "become a customer-centric organization." Instead, when the challenge is complex or the greater vision is far from the current reality, you owe it to your people to help them see the journey as a series of manageable steps, with the most immediate step being short-term and achievable. This greatly increases the perception (and reality) of attainability and also fits with many people's natural desire to achieve quick wins.

5. When strategy changes, leaders need to change. New strategies inevitably require new leadership behaviors. These new behaviors must be carefully explored, consciously identified and put to use with open discussion of gaps between current leadership capabilities and those capabilities that will be required for future success. You can choose to resist change or to see the new strategy as a developmental inflection point for leaders including yourself. Remember, whichever path you choose, others will follow your lead. Making strategy personal always starts with *You*. LE

Andrew Blum is Managing Partner of The Trium Group, a management consulting firm, and past leader in Towers Perrin's Strategy & Operations practice and operational leader in the U.S. Marine Corps. Visit www.triumgroup.com or email jeremy.milk@triumgroup.com.

ACTION: Make strategy personal.

Build High Trust

Use a five-dimension model.



by Pamela Shockley-Zalabak, Sherwyn Morreale, and Michael Z. Hackman

DAILY WE SEE STORIES ABOUT TRUST IN the headlines. From questions about how sponsors respond to allegations of infidelity of Tiger Woods to the claims of consumers regarding the safety of Toyota vehicles, trust, or distrust, is at the core of all relationships.

We first became interested in trust more than a decade ago. At that time, we were convinced trust had a big impact on organizational effectiveness. Our research and consulting experiences convince us trust is not just critically important—it is the main thing—the essential element of success.

Our research supports a model of trust with five key drivers: 1) competence, 2) openness and honesty, 3) concern for employees/stakeholders, 4) reliability, and 5) identification. These drivers are strong predictors of trust across cultures, languages, industries, and types of organizations. The more positive the trust scores, the more effective the organization is perceived to be and the more satisfied employees are with their jobs.

1. Competence. This dimension is the ability of the organization through its leadership, strategy, decisions, quality, and capabilities to meet its challenges. Competence relates to the efficiency and the quality of products or services. Competence comes from the capabilities of all employees.

2. Openness and honesty. This dimension is reflected in how organizations communicate about problems, engage in constructive disagreements, and provide input into job-related decisions. Openness and honesty is positively evaluated when managers and leaders keep confidences and provide information about job performance and evaluation of performance. People evaluate an organization as open and honest when they are provided information about how job-related problems are handled and how major decisions will affect them as individuals.

3. Concern for employees/stakehold-

ers. This is about communication and employment practices. To trust that leaders are concerned for them, people need to be heard. It begins with managers listening to employees and acting on their needs, ideas, or concerns. Trust is also related to how leaders inform employees and how leaders talk about specific employee groups to others. Concern is reflected in the perception and reality of leaders wanting to communicate regularly and seeking to hear and act on employee concerns. People trust the organization when they believe their manager is concerned about their personal well being. Leaders are trusted when policies and procedures reflect concern for the well-being of employees. Safety procedures, health plans and benefits, family leave, vacation, performance evaluation, salary scales, promo-



tional practices, and other organization processes determine whether employees trust the organization.

4. Reliability. This is about keeping commitments and following through. It's about managers doing what they say they will do. It is consistent behavior. It is about leaders keeping the promises they make—or telling why some commitments must change. Reliability should not be confused with sameness or status quo. Reliability is doing what you say you'll do and saying why. Often that means communicating about the need for change from the status quo. Reliability is a steadiness in behavior that builds trust. A reliable organization is a trusted organization because all stakeholders can count on the organization to do what it says it is going to do.

5. Identification. This dimension is the connection between the organization and individual employees most often based on core values. Identification relates to an individual establishing a

personal connection with management and peers and with the entire organization. Identification comes when individuals believe their values are reflected in the values the organization exhibits in day-to-day behaviors. Identification, or the lack thereof, often is directly related to the quality of management-employee relationships. Employees identify with and trust organizations when leaders conduct themselves in ways that closely relate to how employees believe they should act and operate.

Building Trust

Everything leaders do is about building trust. Leaders need to monitor trust levels during times of change by: tracking the culture; examining policies and practices for their messages about trusting relationships; and monitoring performance evaluations, accounting and reporting practices, decision-making, leadership practices, and employee behaviors for the embedded messages about trust. Leaders need to understand what constitutes trust behaviors and to distinguish between interpersonal and organizational trust. Their intentions may be trustworthy, but their impact is interpreted through multiple networks of relationships and events. Employees also benefit from high perceived trust: increased job satisfaction and the ability to innovate, work in virtual environments, and increase productivity.

Examine these dimensions of trust by asking: How is competence expressed? How is concern exhibited? What constitutes reliability, during rapid change? How effectively have vision, values, and norms been communicated? What alignment exists between leaders and employees? How do these dimensions extend to customers and other stakeholders? How can we focus strategically and tactically on trust? The answers are the responsibilities for leaders, PR, HR, and OD professionals and others.

Positive trust is the bond that produces lasting, excellent results. The choice to build trust speaks to the best in us, our high ideals, and our dreams for the future. Replace certainty and control with trust as your bridge to the future. Building trust brings measurable positive results. We hope you will lead with trust as the main thing. LE

Pamela Shockley-Zalabak, Ph.D. (pshockle@uccs.edu), is Chancellor and Professor of Communication at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UC/CS). Sherwyn Morreale, Ph.D. (smorreale@uccs.edu), is director of graduate studies in communication at UC/CS. Michael Z. Hackman, Ph.D. (mhackman@uccs.edu), is Professor in Communication and director of the Honors Program at UC/CS. They are co-authors of Building the High Trust Organization (Jossey-Bass).

ACTION: Use this model to assess trust levels.

Coaching Excellence

Become comfortable with emotions, feelings, and moods.



by Jack Zenger, Joe Folkman,
and Kathleen Stinnett

MOST COMMON IMAGES OF COACHING—an athletic coach watching his players and pointing out actions necessary to win the game; a wise sage offering profound insight about some weighty matter; a newspaper columnist dispensing advice about thorny problems—run counter to what quality business coaches do. Occasionally, a skilled business coach may give advice or offer suggestions; however, the best coaches act as a valuable mirror for people and help them to better assess what they are doing and how they are doing it. *Each coach has a leadership style, an inclination toward handling situations a certain way.*

Most leaders don't choose their leadership style; instead, their style is defined over time and by patterns of action. When Tannenbaum and Schmidt first articulated three styles to leadership—*laissez-faire*, *autocratic*, and *collaborative*—they noted that the workplaces that function best are those where employees feel the most expressed control and influence. Coaching is one key way to increase an employee's feeling of control, influence, and contribution. But different leadership styles offer employees different levels of control and influence.

This begs the questions: *Is there a certain leadership style that works better for coaching?* To answer this, we must first understand each leadership style.

Laissez-faire leadership: Who is driving the bus? The leaders who use *laissez-faire* leadership are hands off or even absent. They often have good intentions; in fact, many leaders adopt this style with high-performing (or highly technical) employees, believing that *high performers don't need managing*. In this system, it would seem on the surface that the employees must have the control and influence since the leader seems to abdicate them. However, if you ask these employees how much control or influence they feel they

have, they'll say: "I'm not sure how I am performing; there is little or no feedback, no clear sense of direction, so I hope that I'm working on the right things." "I feel that I am drifting along, but no one is really paying attention."

Over time, people who are given great latitude (or ignored) feel untethered and ungrounded. Many interpret this style as *benign neglect*. So, if this is your approach with high performers, or your leadership style, consider that your high performers are often the most interested in growth and development; hence, treating them with a hands-off approach is a risky strategy.

Autocratic leadership: My way or the highway. This style includes highly directive leaders who issue orders and commands and leaders whose guidance seems to suggest *my way or the highway*. In an autocratic system, the leader has

influence and control. Employees feel that they have little influence or control, if any. Over time, such leadership style promotes compliance rather than commitment on the part of employees. Employees stop contributing their good ideas and new ways of thinking about things, as they know that their ideas will be shunned or overlooked.

Collaborative leadership. In every dimension of life (marriage, parenting, education, and politics), we've seen a remarkable shift from *autocratic relationships* to more *collaborative interactions*. Still, many leaders retain the autocratic style. Why? Some have argued that the collaborative position requires the greatest effort and the healthiest egos.

In the collaborative style, leaders work and partner with employees and focus on solving problems together without threats of power or need to use hierarchy to influence decisions. Leaders listen and are influenced, and employees are more likely to contribute and feel a sense of ownership. Both leaders and employees feel that their contributions matter and that they can influence both the processes and the end results. That is why the collaborative system works so well: both leaders and employees are invested in the process and the outcomes.

Coaching is the leadership practice that makes the collaborative style work. Organizations need to become more inspiring and humane to meet the needs of the people who populate them. Coaching is an effective way to create greater interaction and alignment between leaders and direct reports.

Cultivating Effective Coaching Skills

Effective coaches and leaders inspire others by emotionally connecting with them. Emotions of inspiration strongly correlate with performance and productivity. Great leaders emotionally connect with their team in many ways, strongly impacting employees' feelings of commitment and engagement.

Leaders use various ways to inspire and motivate their colleagues. When people think of *highly inspiring behavior*,

they often focus on *enthusiasm*. Energetic, enthusiastic cheerleaders are perceived by most as *inspiring*. However, that stereotypical behavior is not typical of many leaders who make an emotional connection. A wide variety of behaviors work to inspire others.

Emotions are the connection switch or catalytic agent in relationships. Emotions focus people's attention, move them to act and overcome inertia. Emotions and inspiration are two sides of the same coin. A leader's ability to inspire people comes down to the leader's willingness and ability to both be aware of and to comfortably use emotion. One key emotion is *enthusiasm*. We think of *enthusiasm* as describing a feeling of excitement, anticipation, and elation about some prospect for the future.

To be more inspirational, become more comfortable in the world of emotions, feelings, and moods. Emotions are contagious. Positive mood has a far-reaching effect on performance, supervision, decision-making, and on team members voluntarily acting for the good of the organization.

Clearly leaders who make an emotional connection with their people magnify their impact. *The broader the leader's connection repertoire, the greater the impact.* With practice, you can become a more inspiring leader. LE

John H. "Jack" Zenger is author or co-author of seven books on leadership and teams. Joseph Folkman, Ph.D., is a speaker, consultant and co-author of six books. Kathleen Stinnett is a Senior Consultant with Zenger Folkman and co-designer of the Extraordinary Coach program. Call 801-705-9375, email info@zengerfolkman.com, or visit www.zengerfolkman.com.

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