

Authors Note: We have assessed over 10,000 executives, counseled Leaders for over 27 years and have been able to assemble a portfolio of observations and techniques. This experience has led us to our recent design and delivery of an accredited graduate level curriculum in Professional Development.

As we have gained experience, we have also tracked thought Leaders such as Dr. Daniel Goleman, and Dr. David Lane and reviewed examples (the good and the questionable) in Leadership such as Jack Welch, Larry Bossidy, F. Ross Johnson, and Frank Borman to name a few; and we also look at people in non-business roles for insights such as Lincoln, Patton, Custer and Shackleton.

Our theories are continually evolving and we are always on the lookout for new data and revelations. We take our own counsel and reflect frequently on what drives organizations to outperform their apparent potential.

What follows is a distillation of some of the concepts and approaches to developing Leaders that we have found useful. Consider it as a Primer or thought provoker as you look at your own Team's development. I'm sure much of it is familiar. Finally, I want to note that in our experience, communications is one of the key themes for developing effective Leaders and a necessary component of each of the other concepts and approaches so we saved it for last.

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J. Santamaria

Reflections on the Foundational Competencies of Leadership and Suggestions on the “Leader as a Role Model”

Revised from a Leadership Symposium Pre-Read: May 24, 2006

Preface

A trend that is becoming clearer as organizations become larger and more complex is the need for senior Leaders to endorse and capitalize on collaboration. The traditional management concept of Master and Apprentice is still extremely valuable but most functional competencies have evolved to the point that no individual is a “Master” of all of them.

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In the traditional model the Master was the expert and took it upon himself (or herself) to train and mentor the apprentice. The Product Management structure that Proctor and Gamble initiated in the 1960's (still in use today) is a good example. Financial, Scientific and other technical functions also have their hierarchy of advancement. Now, however, at the top of the largest and most complex companies, the craft or skill that is to be passed on by the Master (CEO) to his or her "Apprentices" (Senior Team Members) should arguably emphasize Leadership competencies themselves as a means of delivering strategic and financial objectives. Thus the concept of the Leader as the Role Model is added to ranks of evolving Leadership theory. The growing interest in the impact of Leadership on an organization is nothing new. The concepts of Servant Leadership (Noblesse Oblige), Reflective Leadership, Visionary Leadership, Strategic and Tactical Leadership have been studied and analyzed for centuries. For example, in his 16th Century essay entitled, *The Prince*, Machiavelli drew upon the lessons of history as he knew them along with an uncanny appreciation of human behaviors in illustrating his theories. He focused on the 16th Century versions of managing mergers and acquisitions (Chapter V: Concerning the way to govern cities or principalities which lived under their own laws before they were annexed;) the best way to assess and select subordinates (Chapter XXII: Concerning the secretaries of Princes;) how to "keep faith, avoid being despised, and decide whether it is better to be loved or feared." He even contemplated the fate of those who acquire by "wickedness"....a discourse which serves as precursor to Sarbanes-Oxley.

Niccolo Machiavelli was for all practical purposes, an executive coach!

While his reputation has been tainted over the centuries by misplaced ethical judgments, he is a fine example of the counsel given with the aim of strengthening a Leader's hand in pursuit of stakeholder value. It seems that all these Leadership approaches or styles today still have that same goal: To inspire follower-ship to effective action in pursuit of mutual self interest. It happens every day at every level.

To further illustrate, consider that even the most intelligent and skilled CEO will rarely be better than the highly trained and contemporary functional managers that report to him or her in every area. Even considering their own expertise in their original functional discipline, they will not be able to make every decision and guide every action personally as it relates to that function. That is the old Master Apprentice Model. His or her efforts may be better applied against setting clear direction in the context of a strategic vision and inspiring the subordinate functional experts to collaborate with their colleagues (functional experts in their own field) to form a team that is capable of executing strategies better than the competition.

The job of the contemporary Leader may well be to motivate, facilitate and hence achieve the collaborative coordination amongst his or her direct reports that causes large and complex things to happen effectively. The Direct Reports in turn need to follow the example in their own realms and

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become Leaders in their own right as they work to get their own groups to participate in well-coordinated executions.

Drilling down from broad to specific concepts of competencies and skills that contribute to an individual's effectiveness as a Leader let's examine the landscape. Keep in mind, however, there is no single best Leader Model or type: In fact many styles and approaches to Leadership are often employed by the same person as they exercise judgment as to how best to appeal to the emotions and intellects of their "followers."

In looking at any senior team, one will undoubtedly note each member with strengths in many of the competencies that are described; as well as areas that could require improvement.

Another Cut at Leadership Competencies

In consideration of ongoing research and assessment data, the Human Capital Consultants at BeamPines have outlined (at the risk of oversimplification), five categories of competencies in an effort to provide executives with a beginning point as they define the Leader in themselves:

- Presence
- Emotional Intelligence
- Relationship Building
- Influencing and Negotiating
- Communications (the means by which all of these competencies are actualized)

To be sure, these competencies bleed into one another, but they are examined individually below.

Presence

In Jack Welch's book *Winning*, he puts the focus on the Leader as the instrument of change and inspiration. Defining the elements of Leadership that create teamwork and the steps in accepting and embracing the role of Leader at the highest levels, *Winning* defines Leadership traits as follows:

- Positive Energy
- Ability to Energize Others
- Edge: the courage to make tough yes-or-no decisions
- Execute: the ability to get the job done
- Passion: deep authentic excitement about work

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This is a good foundation and clearly a working concept, but it is very broad and can be tailored to each individual. Presence does not mean Hollywood typecasting, nor does it dictate a specific style. Your passion may not manifest itself in the same way as someone else's.

Consider that presence may be detected by others as an aura: Dr Gloria Bullman, in working with Navy seals once observed in Leaders:

“That emotional vibration that one transmits when they know where they're going, how they're going to get there and what it will bring tempered by the vibration that transmits they care about how they get there and that they do not surrender to arrogance; always keeping a weather eye on all the unknowns that can or should cause them to alter course. I'm not sure I can define it better than that, but I'm with Jack, (referring to Jack Welch) ‘I know it when I see it.’”

At the end of the day our visceral reactions are a combination of intellect, common sense, instinct and emotion, and this is the stuff that inspires us to follow a Leader.

Emotional Intelligence

In Dr. Daniel Goleman's work on Emotional Intelligence, he speaks to the notion that as a Leader, one can no longer afford to respond to a situation based on emotions. Instead, one must understand their own emotions, master them and express them as they will be best utilized in impacting individuals or organizations. This can be translated into:

- Knowing yourself
- Recognizing your emotions
- Differentiating between emotions
- Knowing the reason behind the emotion
- Building self-confidence

In addition, once we become more familiar with our emotions, we can begin to use them as discretionary tools in order to penetrate the hearts and minds of those we seek to influence. Some examples are:

Maintaining Control

- Resisting or delaying an impulse, drive or temptation to act
- Controlling negative emotions and behavior
- Managing emotions in a flexible and adaptable way

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Reading/Understanding Others and Perceiving Accurately

- Being aware of the emotions of others
- Understanding how and why people feel and act as they do
- Accurately assessing a situation
- Keeping a broad perspective and being objective
- Seeing the impact of emotions on our perceptions

Communicating with Flexibility

- Having a full range of emotional expression
- Being authentic/genuine
- Addressing your needs as well as the needs of others

Relationships

Our experience with literally thousands of derailed executives demonstrates that this part of the success equation is simple to grasp yet often ignored in practice (with disastrous results.) The importance of developing trusted relationships at all levels both internally and externally can not be underestimated.

When there is a relationship in effect, things can and do happen much more quickly and effectively. The reason is simple: By their very nature, relationships are built on Trust. Trust does not always mean consensus or seeing things the same way. Trust in its simplest manifestation is a conditioned response to “consistency.”

Relationships that are built upon the trust that each party demonstrates as defined by behaviors as simple as consistency, reliability, accountability, responsibility and commitment are relationships that allow people to be less defensive in new situations, and more receptive to new or different concepts. Where there is no trust and no relationship, or when there is no reliability, there will be self interest, self preservation and often defensive aggression. To be effective as a Leader, reflect upon the way you come across. Think about the way others might view you when you're no longer in the room. What do you want them to think of your relationship with them?

If you as a Leader are to be effective in leveraging relationships, consider taking the time to do the following:

- Develop a broad network to get support and exchange ideas
- Recognize and respond to your own needs and the needs of others
- Adapt personal style to meet the style of others
- Act to preserve relationships even under conflict or stress
- Promote trusting collaborative relationships *through your own example*

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Influencing and Negotiating

Consider the ability of the Leader to influence the myriad of levels that he or she needs to effect execution. Win/Win Negotiating techniques are helpful in this endeavor. In this model, the Leader acknowledges the legitimacy of those he or she seeks to influence. This manifestation of respect for their needs and wants will help align the Leader with their constituency in finding the common ground. Consider how many of our daily interactions really become negotiations of one kind or another. You don't have to be sitting across a table from a supplier, customer, auditor or Union President. You may be working on your kids to clean their rooms or your spouse to pick a vacation spot. Perhaps you need your team to deliver a project that requires working over a holiday or you must win over your peer who sees it differently than you do if you are to execute an important launch.

The Leaders who have most successfully embraced win/win negotiating usually have more followers and fewer enemies, internally and externally. They master the art of getting things done with and through others. Even though they know they may hold the power card, they know that life is unpredictable and power exercised poorly can result in a grenade rolling under your bunk while you're sleeping.

The benefits of successfully using Win/Win Negotiation techniques can be summarized as follows:

- Prepare by understanding the real objectives
- Understand who you are going to have to influence
- Have command of the facts and variables that will influence the outcome
- Help motivate people to support your ideas through your relationships
- Uncover and reduce the other party's concerns about perceived risks to their simplest meaning (uncover the true/core issues)
- Provide the opportunity to solve core issues and reach agreements which can be accepted by all parties
- Develop next steps
- Confirm agreements

Effective negotiators need a variety of skills to influence others to take risks. Active/reflective listening skills are necessary to uncover the other party's needs, goals, expectations and concerns, and to validate what is being said; relationship-building skills are necessary to engender trust. It needs an effective command of communications to convey the message of win/win.

As a wise Union Negotiator once quipped: *"Any damned fool can negotiate a strike: It takes a bit of thought, empathy and dialogue to negotiate a settlement."*

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Communications

Consider the art and science of communications in all its forms: formal, informal, written, verbal and non-verbal. Also, consider the setting and participants involved in communications efforts: one-on-one, small groups, formal presentations and presentations to large audiences. Each of these venue opportunities inevitably present themselves to a Leader, and in exercising their EQ, they should be aware of the impact they want their communications to have and prepare for them.

All of the other qualities that a Leader possesses can remain undercover and under-utilized if they are unable to effectively share ideas and direction with those they hope to influence. They should ask themselves about the message they want to send, how they want to send it, how we need to shape it and which of the different skills required to effectively communicate do they need to employ. This does not mean all Leaders must possess the oratory skills of Lincoln or Kennedy, but they must know themselves, be comfortable with themselves and able to intellectually articulate their message. Then a variety of techniques can be employed to effectively get the message across. Simplicity is usually a safe choice.

In the highly useful and insightful book on verbal communications, *Crucial Conversations*, the authors focus on the particular “Human Skill” that makes the difference in getting your messages across. The key to their advice is to tune in to the audience; understand their fears; and realize that they can’t listen or respond if they are busy being defensive, angry, confused or intimidated.

They also recommend that in each communication encounter, the goal of meaningful dialogue should be high on the list. Always consider the impact your words and messages may have. What do you not want to have happen and what do you want for the relationship between you and your “audience?”

In assessing themselves as communicators, the following areas should be considered by Leaders:

- Practicing Mindful Dialogue
- Transacting vs. connecting
- Active Listening
- Listening to ensure you are heard

Since listening is so important to maximizing the benefits and potential that can be derived from others, a number of other considerations are raised:

- Do you listen for content?
- What’s getting in the way?
- What are the blockers that inhibit effective listening?
- Do you listen for underlying meaning?

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Also consider our outbound messages and suggest practicing Principles of Focused Speaking:

- Constructing succinct and articulate messages
- Communicate your message effectively to an individual and to a group
- Confirm that you delivered your message effectively

Part of the Mindful Dialogue process includes:

- Giving and Getting Feedback
- Preparing and delivering individual and group feedback
- Preparing for reaction and response to feedback
- Reflection: How could I have communicated better?

Sharing Information to Mobilize a Team is another area that benefits from forethought and preparation in:

- Structuring the outline and content of your message
- Eliciting and encouraging participation

In making formal presentations to large groups and/or audiences, Leaders should practice determining what needs to be heard and how it should be presented, and integrating personal style with stylistic skills.

Both personal and “stylistic” skills should also be considered as a conscious act of preparation for communicating:

VERBAL	NON-VERBAL
Acquiescent	Eye contact
Aggressive	Body position
Arrogant	Voice inflection, tone and volume
Assertive	Facial expressions/hand gestures

As in all of the techniques that a Leader employs, the Goleman philosophy of understanding the emotional relevance of a Leader’s projection continues to hold true.

A very quiet, but well respected Leader in a Fortune 50 Company in responding to an interviewer’s question on why he never said much replied succinctly: *“Because I can’t listen when I’m talking.”*

It is important that Leaders also become coaches, role models and perpetual “students” of their craft

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The title of this section is the message.

Coaching senior executives in Leadership competencies and skills is essential. The Leaders of today must practice this mentoring/ teaching art because it makes sense and more often than not because the Board or stake holder has a fiduciary and often legal (Sarbanes-Oxley again) incentive to insist upon it. They must take personal responsibility for this, and use the resources required, including objective external eyes, if appropriate to fulfill this responsibility.

As a pre-requisite, the person being coached and mentored must want to grow in areas that he or she feels less confident in. However it also rests with the “Leader/Coach” to effectively communicate the feedback message to the executive. What this means is that the Coach plans, prepares and presents to the executive in a manner that will be received and valued. Personality type, learning style and approach to conflict are all helpful in planning how to deliver feedback, talk about learning goals and discuss real situations. Here the Coach is on a continuous learning path as well.

Developing awareness in the executive of their own strengths and the areas that may be holding them back is the first step. The executive must come to grips with the way the world views them and must acknowledge that perception is indeed reality in the realm of organizational dynamics. The stages upon which they are playing, and the audiences which they are addressing, are real considerations in their ability to achieve their goals. A Leader isn’t really a Leader without followers. And a Leader who leads from behind with a bayonet to the backs of the constituents will never be able to close his or her eyes for rest or reflection.

This receiving of feedback and building self awareness through reflection can sometimes result in a defensive reaction and resistance to embracing the situation and committing to personal growth and learning as a human being and an executive.

Establishing trust and rapport to gain this commitment is important for the “Leader/Coach.” This is especially true when the performance stakes are high. Does the executive believe on a visceral level that this learning will be good for them? Do they believe that the Coach will care about them? Can they embrace the emotional maturity levels that will be needed to grow? Do they believe that mistakes are tolerated and really do present learning opportunities?

Most executives who really focus on Leadership as part of their craft become more self-confident and very supportive of others in these efforts. They also tend to be more effective collaborators. All of these self development efforts directly support the organization’s succession needs.

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Closing Reflection

As each individual is different, and each organizational culture will require different approaches and styles, the above considerations should be taken in the most general sense and any applications should be accompanied by careful consideration and planning. Finally any one seeking to develop their Leadership competencies can do so. It does not require any great in bred talent. It does require commitment, and caring.

Lt. General Mel Zais, who commanded the Screaming Eagles Airborne Division in Vietnam and later lectured in the joint War College system once offered this stunningly simple advice: *“The one single piece of advice that I can give you that will make you a better Leader and give you a happier, more productive life is this: You must care...because if as a Leader, they know that you care about them, they will literally die for you.”*

By comparison, inspiring and leading an organization to sell light bulbs, shredded wheat, copper wire or widgets should be easy.

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References and Additional Readings:

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