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Founder, Career
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# What Matters Now

# Effective Management

# Are We Having Fun Yet?

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# LEADERSHIP Excellence

*Warren Bennis's*

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

## Castle or Crumb?

*This ragged entrepreneurial leader is so focused on his fish (his future)— his belief so firm and resolute—that he opts to pass by the beautiful castle of present and proximate opportunity and press on until he finds fulfillment of his aim and ambition.*

# What Matters Now—and Then

*Collins cites Drucker as then; Hamel is for now.*

### by Ken Shelton

ANY LEADER MIGHT WONDER, how can we win in a world of relentless change, ferocious competition, and unstoppable information—now and then, always?

*Jim Collins* writes about *then*: "As Peter Drucker shows, *the very best leaders are first and foremost effective managers.* Those who seek to lead but fail to manage will become either irrelevant or dangerous, not only to their organizations, but to society." He asks: "What accounts for Drucker's enormous impact? I believe the answer lies not just in his specific ideas, but in his entire *approach* to ideas, composed of *four* elements: 1) he looked out the window, not in the mirror; 2) he started first—and always—with results; 3) he asked audacious questions; and 4) he infused all his work with a concern and compassion for the individual."

*Gary Hamel* responds for *now*: "In a world of fractured certainties and battered trust, *some things matter more than others*. While the challenges facing organizations are limitless, leader bandwidth isn't. That's why leaders have to be clear about what really matters now. What are the make-or-break issues that determine whether you thrive or dive in the years ahead? *What matters now* is that mangers expand their sense of stewardship and embrace timeless values such as truth, prudence and fairness. What's needed is a values revolution to turn ordinary employees into inspired, extraordinary innovators."

*Then is now, now is then.* Both Collins and Hamel base their books and place their bets on what works *then and now*—timeless values, principles and practices, including innovation that distinguishes organizations and differentiates products.

### Pearl of Global Leadership Wisdom

In commenting on the life, death and rebirth of America's global leadership, *Mona Pearl*, author of *Grow Globally*, writes: "As trade borders become seamless, leaders of U.S. companies must scramble to acquire the tools and skills necessary to survive and thrive in the competitive global market. Our nation is lagging behind and suffering from a negative recovery because of our own unwillingness to play in the sandbox with the other nations in the new economic order. Are we so spoiled that we don't know how? The power in the world has shifted, and we now need to learn to collaborate, instead of dictate. We are a valuable leader, but not the leader of everything anymore. Is it arrogance? Ignorance? Or a bit of both? How does isolation, constant self-praise, and ignoring the rest of the world by not wanting to learn and accept the new order help the United States thrive?"

Fueled by our rugged individualistic and isolationist heritage, collaboration across international borders requires reconditioning, says Pearl. "We must move beyond the *us-against-them* approach and recognize that a prosperous world translates to more business—a *win-win situation* for all. When American business embraces challenge, it finds success. Leaders must look into the global marketplace to discover new opportunities and new avenues to generate future growth. We were the stars when there was no competition. The game, rules and players have changed, and we yet are still playing the *old game*, with *old rules*, thinking that the players will just adapt. It is time we get rid of the illusion that things will go back—and go forward: refine our skills, adjust our mindset, reaffirm our focus, retest our strategy and modify our direction.

"Global leadership depends on the ability to view the world in a new way. *Exceptional skill* is needed to evaluate the options, manage the risks, and execute a winning expansion strategy. Be fast, flexible, innovative, motivated and enjoy the adventure!" Visit www.monapearl.com.

*Peter Drucker*

### Global LD Programs

The leading drivers of global leadership training are needs related to specific strategic goals and values, according to a study by AMA Enterprise. "Organizations create global leadership programs to achieve particular business objectives," said SVP *Sandi Edwards*. "Senior management knows that operating in a global marketplace presents new challenges to emerging leaders and demands of them new competencies. This is why such programs are flourishing and why top management is directly involved." *Contact*: Phil Ryan, pgryan@aol.com. **LE**

*Ken Shelton*
*Editor since 1984*

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# Effective Management

*The best leaders first excel at this.*

**by Jim Collins**

D URING A DISCUSSION in graduate school, a professor challenged my first-year class: *Managers and leaders—are they different?* The conversation unfolded something like this: "Leaders set the vision; managers just figure out how to get there," said one student. "Leaders inspire and motivate, whereas managers keep things organized," said another. "Leaders elevate people to the highest values. Managers manage the details."

The discussion revealed an underlying worship of *leadership* and a disdain for *management*. Leaders are inspired. Leaders are large. Leaders are the kids with black leather jackets, sunglasses and sheer unadulterated cool. Managers, well, they're the somewhat nerdy kids, decidedly less interesting, lacking charisma. And of course, we all wanted to be *leaders*, and leave the drudgery of management to others.

## Drucker Sets Us Straight

We could not have been more misguided and juvenile in our thinking. As Peter Drucker shows, *the very best leaders are first and foremost effective managers*. Those who seek to lead but fail to manage will become either irrelevant or dangerous, not only to their organizations, but to society.

For free society to function we must have high-performing, self-governed institutions in every sector, not just in business, but equally in the social sectors. Without that, as Drucker pointed out, the only workable alternative is totalitarian tyranny. Strong institutions, in turn, depend directly on excellent management, and no individual had a greater impact on the practice of management and no single book captures its essence better than his seminal text, *Management*.

***What accounts for Drucker's enormous impact?*** I believe the answer lies not just in his specific ideas, but in his entire *approach* to ideas, composed of ***four elements***:

1. He looked out the window, not in the mirror;

2. He started first—and always—with results;

3. He asked audacious questions;

4. He infused all his work with a *concern* and *compassion* for the individual.

***I once had a conversation with a faculty colleague about the thinkers who had influenced us***. I mentioned Drucker. My colleague wrinkled his nose, and said: "Drucker? But he's so *practical*." Drucker would have loved that moment of disdain, reveling in being criticized for the fact that his ideas worked. They worked because he derived them by precise observation of empirical facts. He pushed always to look *out there*, in the world, to derive ideas, challenging himself and his students to "Look out the window, not in the mirror!" Drucker falls in line with thinkers like Darwin, Freud and Taylor—empiricists all. Darwin wrote copious notebooks, pages and pages about pigeons and turtles. Freud used his therapeutic practice as a laboratory. Taylor conducted empirical experiments, systematically tracking thousands of details. Like them, Drucker immersed himself in empirical facts and then asked, "What *underlying principle* explains these facts, and how can we harness that principle?"

***Drucker belonged to the church of results.*** Instead of starting with an almost religious belief in a particular category of answers—a belief in leadership, culture, information, innovation, decentralization, marketing, strategy, or any other category—Drucker began first with the question "what accounts for superior results?" and *then* derived answers. He started with the outputs—the definitions and markers of success—and worked to discover the inputs, not the other way around. And then he preached the religion of results to his students and clients, not just to business corporations but equally to government and the social sectors. The more noble your mission, the more he demanded: what will define superior performance? "Good intentions," he would seemingly yell without ever raising his voice, "are no excuse for incompetence."

And yet while practical and empirical, Drucker never became technical or trivial, nor did he succumb to the trend in modern academia to answer (in the words of the late John Gardner) "questions of increasing irrelevance with increasing precision."

***By remaining a professor of management—not as a science, but as a liberal art—he gave himself the freedom to pursue audacious questions.*** My first reading of Drucker came on vacation in Monterey, California. My wife and I embarked on one of our adventure walks through a used book store, treasure hunting for unexpected gems. I came across a beaten-up, dog-eared copy of *Concept of the Corporation*, expecting a tutorial on how to build a company. But within a few pages, I realized that it asked a much bigger question: what is the proper role of the corporation at this stage of civilization?

Drucker had been invited to observe General Motors from the inside, and the more he saw, the more disturbed he became. In the end, he deemed GM—then perhaps the most powerful corporation in the world— a failure. "General Motors can be seen as the triumph and failure of the technocrat manager," he later wrote. "In terms of sales and profits [GM] has succeeded admirably . . . But it has also failed abysmally— in terms of public reputation, of public esteem, or acceptance by the public." Drucker passionately believed in management not as a technocratic exercise, but as a *profession* with a noble calling, like the very best of medicine and law.

Drucker could be acerbic and impatient, a curmudgeon. But behind the prickly surface, and behind every page in his works, stands a man with tremendous compassion for the individual. He sought not just to make our economy more productive, but to make all of society more productive *and* more humane. To view other human beings as merely a means to an end, rather than as ends in themselves, struck Drucker as profoundly immoral. And as much as he wrote about institutions and society, I believe that he cared most deeply about the individual.

***I personally experienced Drucker's concern and compassion in 1994***, when I found myself at a crossroads, trying to decide whether to jettison a traditional path in favor of carving my own. I mentioned to an editor for *Industry Week* that I admired Peter Drucker. "I

recently interviewed Peter," he said, "and I'd be happy to ask if he'd be willing to spend some time with you."

I never expected anything to come of it, but one day I got a message on my answering machine. "This is Peter Drucker"—slow, deliberate, in Austrian accent—"I would be pleased to spend a day with you, Mr. Collins. Please give me a call." We set a date, and I flew to Claremont, California. Drucker welcomed me into his home, enveloping my extended hand into two of his. "Mr. Collins, so very pleased to meet you. Please come inside." He invested the better part of a day sitting in his favorite wicker chair, asking questions, teaching, guiding and challenging. I made a pilgrimage to Claremont seeking wisdom from the greatest management thinker, and I came away feeling that I'd met a compassionate and generous human being who—almost as a side benefit—was a prolific genius.

*There are two ways to change the world:* the *pen* (the use of ideas) and the sword (the use of *power*). Drucker chose the *pen*, and thereby rewired the brains of thousands who carry the *sword*. Those who choose the *pen* have an advantage over those who wield the *sword*: *the written word never dies*. If you never met Peter Drucker during his lifetime, you can get to know him now. You can converse with him. You can write notes to him. You can argue with him, be irritated by him, and inspired. He can mentor you, if you let him, teach you, challenge you, change you—and through you, the world you touch.

*Peter Drucker shined a light in a dark and chaotic world,* and his words remain as relevant today as when he banged them out on his cranky typewriter decades ago. They deserve to be read by every person of responsibility. That free society triumphed in the 20th century guarantees nothing about its triumph in the 21st; centralized tyranny remains a potent rival, and the weight of history is not on our side.

*When young people ask, "What can I do to make a difference?" one of the best answers is this:* Get your hands on an organization aligned with your passion, if not in business, then in the social sectors. If you can't find one, start one. And then lead it—through the practice of management—to deliver extraordinary results and to make such a distinctive impact that you multiply your own impact by a thousand-fold.**LE**

*Jim Collins is the best-selling author of* Built to Last, Good to Great, *and* Great by Choice. *Visit www.JimCollins.com.*

ACTION: As a leader, make a difference.

# What Matters Now
*Focus on five paramount issues.*

### by Gary Hamel

LEADERS FACE A MULTI-faceted agenda for building organizations that can win in a world of relentless change, ferocious competition, and unstoppable innovation.

*I issue an impassioned plea to reinvent management as we know it*—to rethink the assumptions we have about capitalism, institutions, and life at work—and offer a blueprint for creating organizations that are fit for the future and fit for human beings.

Obviously, many things matter now, including social media, *big data*, emerging markets, virtual collaboration, risk management, open innovation, and sustainability. But in a world of fractured certainties and battered trust, *some things matter more than others*.

While the challenges are limitless, leadership bandwidth isn't. So, you have to be clear about *what matters now*. Ask yourself: what are the make-or-break challenges that will determine whether we thrive or dive in the years ahead? For me, *five issues are paramount*:

• *Values:* In a free market economy, there'll always be excesses, but in recent years, rapacious bankers and unprincipled CEOs have seemed hell-bent on setting new records for egocentric irresponsibility. In a just world, they would be sued for slandering capitalism. Not surprisingly, *large corporations* are now among society's *least trusted institutions*. As trust has waned, the regulatory burden on business has grown. Reversing these trends will require a *moral renaissance*.

• *Innovation:* In a densely connected global economy, successful products and strategies are quickly copied. Without *relentless innovation* success is fleeting. Nevertheless, few companies make innovation everyone's job, every day. Innovation happens "despite the system," not because of it. That's a problem, because *innovation is the only sustainable strategy for creating long-term value*. After a decade of talking about innovation, it's time to close the gap between *rhetoric* and *reality* by recali-

brating priorities and *retooling mindsets*.

• *Adaptability:* As change accelerates, so must the pace of strategic renewal. Problem is, deep change is almost always crisis-driven; it's tardy, traumatic, and expensive. In most organizations, too many things perpetuate the past, and too few encourage proactive change. The *party of the past* is usually more powerful than the *party of the future*. That's why incumbents typically lose out to upstarts who are unencumbered by the past. In a world where industry leaders can become laggards overnight, the only way to *sustain success is to reinvent it*.

• *Passion:* Innovation and the will to change are products of passion—fruits of a *righteous discontent with the status quo*. Sadly, the average workplace is a buzz killer. *Petty rules*, *pedestrian goals*, and *pyramidal structures* drain the emotional vitality out of work. Maybe that didn't matter in the knowledge economy, but it matters enormously in the creative economy. Customers today expect *the exceptional*, but few organizations deliver it. The problem is not a lack of competence, but a lack of ardor. The difference between *insipid* and *inspired* is passion.

• *Ideology:* Why do our organizations seem less adaptable, innovative, spirited, and noble than the people who work in them? What makes them *inhuman*? The answer: *a management ideology that deifies control*. Whatever the rhetoric to the contrary, *control is the principal preoccupation of most managers and management systems*. While conformance (to budgets, performance targets, operating policies, and work rules) creates economic value, it creates less than it used to. What creates value today is *the unexpectedly brilliant product, the wonderfully weird campaign, and the novel customer experience*. Trouble is, in a regime where *control reigns supreme*, the unique gets hammered out. The choice is stark: resign yourself to the fact that your organization will never be more adaptable, innovative, or inspiring than it is now, or search for an alternative to the *creed of control*. Better processes and models are not enough—we need *better principles* to venture beyond the familiar precincts of *management-as-usual* and trivial heuristics (*get everyone rowing in the same direction*). **LE**

*Gary Hamel is author of* What Matters Now (Wiley/JB). *This article is adapted with permission. Visit www.garyhamel.com.*

ACTION: Focus on these five paramount issues.

# Solving Problems

*Do it in whole-brain style!*

**by Chris Griffiths**

WHOLE BRAIN THINKing isn't news. It's now common knowledge that we can achieve phenomenal results when we apply more of the brain's skills to what we're doing. So why are so many business leaders still unwilling to use it for *hard* business tasks like analysis? Or complex problem solving? How have you used whole brain thinking to successfully solve a problem? Here's my take on how you can analyze and solve problems whole brain style!

## Left, Right and Whole

We've all heard the theory about the brain being split into two parts—the left side, which exhibits rational and logical skills, and the right side, which is emotional, holistic and intuitive. Left brain skills include things like words, numbers, language and lists, while the skills of the right brain deal with images, colour, shape and imagination.

*This idea that the left and right sides of the brain have different thinking patterns is nothing new*. Actually, it's been given great public attention in recent years with people realizing that both sides of the brain are of *equal value*. Yet it's just starting to find its place in business. Most leaders, managers and professionals still believe that the logical left brain skills are far more useful in business—for analyzing, making decisions, and solving issues and challenges. Right brain skills like imagination and daydreaming are still seen as having no place in business—a waste of time even.

*What leaders need, however, is effective right brain/left brain crossover and collaboration.* Without this, they drastically limit their power to make optimal decisions that are balanced, rational, and that feel right.

## Left and Right Brains Unite!

Using both left- and right-brain skills is beneficial in business, particularly for problem solving. This isn't as simple as saying you should just use right brain skills to generate ideas to solve your problem and then switch to left brain skills to analyze the usefulness of those ideas.

Most decisions and problems benefit from the initial generation of lots of ideas. But this isn't a random process. When you want to produce creative ideas, how effective is it just to daydream randomly or to spring a brainstorming session onto your team? It's not very effective at all—it merely leads to half-brained ideas! To generate quality ideas, you need:

• *Purpose*—Define the *problem* or *goal*
• *Planning/organization*—Follow clear principles for brainstorming



• *Strategy*—Use individual/group idea generation in the correct order and structure

## You Need Right-Brain Skills

Likewise, when it's time to analyze all the multiple options and perspectives that you come up with, don't just apply your logical left-brain skills. You need to test each solution against your *heart* (how does it feel in your gut?) as well as your *head* (does it make sense logically?) Good decision-making doesn't ignore or deny emotions—it sees them as a valuable input, helping to screen and sort ideas through another lens. It's impossible to *leave emotions out of it* during analysis because they're a part of everything we do—we can't just turn them off!

Every problem situation can benefit from a right-brain *big picture* view of the data, facts, and possible solutions. Leaders who use only their left brain and work with details (facts, data) and logic without taking account of the *whole picture* or *their emotions* are losing out on vital ingredients that could help them *think up* something special.

## Mind Map Your Way to a Solution

It's easy for me to say that you need to begin consciously using your whole brain when what you really need to know is *how* to go about doing it. A good place to start is with a *Mind Map*. When you *Mind Map*, you're using your entire range of cortical skills, as it's both a logical and creative activity. A *Mind Map* has structure and is an effective note-taking method, but it also uses vibrant colours, striking images and curving lines to draw on those right brain skills. And even during analysis, as you branch outwards from the centre of your map you can continue to be *generative* and open up new connections, while still *converging* towards a single solution.

This idea of divergent thinking and convergent thinking in one process might sound paradoxical, but the truth is they don't have to be distinct strategies. In fact, using them at the same time can better engage the left and right brain processes to help you build practical meaning and output from your ideas. This is why *Mind Maps* are an ideal method for analysing and evaluating your ideas. They show you the whole view, from the big picture right down to the smaller details and facts—both the forest and the trees!

## Try the 3S Approach

In my business I like to use an approach I devised called the *3S Analysis System* (*Sort, Screen, Select*) to evaluate ideas and come to a decision. During the screening phase, I use a *Mind Map* to assess the more promising ideas based on:

• **Head vs. Heart:** Is it logical and practical? (Head). What does my intuition tell me? (Heart).
• **Greens vs. Reds:** What are the positives/strengths of the idea? (Greens). What are the negatives/weaknesses of the idea? (Reds)

I find that this is a great way to discover the *deal-breakers* and *deal-makers* of each idea and get an all-round perspective. It's also remarkable because you're using divergent thinking to stretch your mind to explore all the features of every possibility, while at the same time gradually converging to a solution—meaning that you're using your whole brain! **LE**

*Chris Griffiths is CEO of ThinkBuzan and author of* GRASP the Solution. *Visit www.thinkbuzan.com.*

*ACTION: Take account of the whole picture.*

# As a Leader Thinketh

*Are your thoughts an ally or enemy?*

**by Gregg Thompson**

I DEDICATE THIS ARTICLE to the wonderful men and women who are committed to making a real difference in the *work*, *careers*, and *lives* of others.

Here is a hard truth about leadership development that many practitioners prefer to ignore: Much of the work done promoting a particular set of leadership practices or competencies is for naught *because it fails to influence the leader's thinking*. It falls on deaf ears. Any behavioral changes are short-lived unless there is a sustained change in the way the leader thinks.

**We tend to focus so much on practices and competencies that we neglect the leader's mind**—and yet it is from here that *all great leadership* emanates. In 1903, James Allen wrote a remarkable essay, *As a Man Thinketh*, encouraging us to seize the transforming power of thought. Allen asserted that people have the power to shape themselves (their character and motivation) by being disciplined and intentional in their thoughts. Leaders have much to learn from his message of hope and optimism in a time of hardship.

## Thinking and Leadership

This is a simple concept, yet one many leaders would rather ignore: *Good thinking creates good leaders; bad thinking creates bad leaders!* This is easy to understand but tough for many leaders and leadership development practitioners to accept. It is so much neater to define *leadership* as a predetermined list of practices and competencies. However, *leaders* create or diminish themselves by their thoughts.

**Leadership is an acquired habit that flows directly from repetitive thoughts.** For example, the more you think about the value of *creativity* and *diverse ideas*, the more you'll be an effective leader of innovation. A leadership *habit* starts with a thought, then becomes a *choice*, then a *practice* which becomes a permanent part of your leadership repertoire. This is how leaders create themselves. A repetitive thought ultimately results in a new leadership practice—for better or for worse!

I am not advocating the self-centered *If I think it, I will get it* concept promoted in *The Secret*. To increase their effectiveness, leaders need to adopt an "*If I think it, I will do it*" approach.

Are your thoughts your *ally* or *enemy*?
• What are your thoughts about your organization? Do you think about it as a chaotic, messy institution or a diverse, creative community?
• What are your thoughts about leadership? Do you think about it as an entitlement to power, privilege and wealth or as a calling to serve others?
• What are your thoughts about others? Do you think of them as flawed pawns on your chessboard or as wonderfully gifted and unique partners?
• What do you think about your work? Do you think of it as an inescapable chore or as a way to live out your purpose and legacy?
• What are your thoughts about the future? Do you think about it as a road lined with perils and enemies or as a once-in-a-lifetime adventure?

## Cultivating Leadership Thought

*Think of your mind as a garden.* What are you cultivating? Allen asserts that "A man's mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether cultivated or neglected, it must, and will, bring forth."

Leaders who refuse to change their thinking are refusing to grow. I find it particularly sad to see leaders who invest a herculean effort into improving their organization (and everyone in it) but refuse to change themselves.

If they are being truthful, most leaders will admit that much of their daily effort is directed at trying to change others or accommodate their behavior. They are missing the point. As a leader, **when you change the way you think, others will change the way they act!** Leadership starts in your head! All *organization development* starts with *leadership development*—you can't improve your leadership without improving your thinking. Fortunately, we can change our thinking. We are masters of our own minds. I recognize that the deepest levels of consciousness may be hardwired, but *we are the authors of our day-to-day thinking patterns*. Our thoughts are the source of our power.

Allen says: "If no useful seeds are put into it, then an abundance of useless weeds will fall therein, and will continue to produce their kind." *So how can you keep your mind weed-free?* You need to be ever vigilant for the most toxic varieties: jealousy, spite, envy, entitlement and judgment . . . and rip these out before they take hold of your mind and diminish your leadership. We all have these weeds. Leaders who allow them to flourish are choosing a path towards distrust and weakness. The *diligent gardener* is rewarded with *respect* and *admiration*.

**As a leader, what are you feeding your mind?** What seeds are you planting to create these new thinking patterns? Valuable seeds can be found in a great book, rich conversation, challenging coach, quiet contemplation—the world is brimming with good seeds and not-so-great seeds. Are you stimulating your mind with Plato or with Angry Birds?

Allen wrote: "The wise man, by adding thought to thought and deed to deed, buildeth his character." As much as we try to hide it, others have a pretty good idea as to what we are thinking. A leader cannot *not* act, in the long run, according to his or her thinking.

**Thoughts are revealed through actions.** A leader's character is always on display. For example, how often have you seen a newly-minted leader lather profuse compliments on their team members only to be met with ambivalence and disdain? The team members are likely thinking "Do you think so little of me that you believe you can buy my loyalty and best work with shallow flattery?" The leader would do better to seriously *consider the wonderful talents and work of each team member*, and *develop a sincere appreciation for each*. Following this reflection, a simple, sincere "Thank you for being a part of this team. I am honored to be your partner." will light up many eyes and lift spirits.

Your current thinking has brought you this far. What new thinking will create the leader you wish to be? **LE**

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**ACTION: Cultivate a leadership mindset.**

# Leadership Decisions

*B e w a r e   o f   t h e s e   s i x   m i n d   b u g s .*

### by Larry J. Bloom

WE'VE ALL SUFFERED from the *flawed leadership decisions* that led to the subprime mortgage crises and ensuing recession. But did you know the damage was likely *avoidable*?

In January 2011, the U.S. Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission reported: "This *avoidable* crisis was caused by: *dramatic breakdowns in corporate governance*, including too many financial firms acting recklessly and taking on too much risk." In Dec. 2011, two whistle blowers offered a rare look at how executives ignored their repeated warnings. What were leaders at *venerable companies* like Lehman Brothers, Bear Stearns, Merrill Lynch, Countrywide Financial and Citigroup thinking when they made disastrously poor decisions that failed to fully consider the risk? How did lending to people who could not afford it seem like such a good idea at the time? Based on my experience and research, here is my view of the problem and *what to avoid*.

## Six Thinking Bugs

The problems these leaders faced did not lie in information corrupted by software bugs or other factors outside their thinking, but rather they were *self-inflicted* as a result of *mind-bugs*—bugs in the critical internal processes in our minds. Mind-bugs are hardwired in human nature, and highly resistant to feedback. They are a function of *habitual and compulsive mental processes* and our attachment to them. Mind-bugs can affect fact gathering, analysis, insights, judgments, and decisions (thus increasing risk).

So, what caused these leaders to convince themselves and their directors their practices were sound?

Here are *six mind-bugs* that were likely at play. Look for them before you make decisions to avoid cognitive traps, reduce risk and improve results.

*1. Informed leader fallacy: A belief by leaders that they are better informed and have better instincts than others, simply because they are the leaders.* We deeply desire leaders who know what they're doing. And by the time we achieve a leadership position, we're good at making others feel positive about our judgment, even if there's no strong basis. With a little success, we become overconfident (when, in fact, our success may be due to dumb luck). The fierce personal confidence and sense of infallibility that characterizes many leaders serves as a breeding ground for this mind-bug. Most decision-makers will trust their own intuitions because they think they see the situation clearly. So they can fall into a trap of believing they're better informed than they are.

*2. Shooting the Critics: The tendency to marginalize people who disagree with us.* Leaders know that their decisions are subject to their judgment being questioned. Yet, they're not in the market to have their decisions, beliefs, and choices questioned. As leaders, we tend to



marginalize people who disagree with us. Then people stop telling us the truth, avoid rocking the boat, and just quietly stay out of the line of fire. This mind-bug causes intolerance for challenge and acceptance of our beliefs as sufficient, leaving huge gaps in mindful evaluation and judgments.

*3. Outcome attachment: Being so attached to outcomes that serve our interest, we fail to look for problems in our thinking and decisions.* We're attached to outcomes that serve our interests, helping us get what we want or what we believe others expect of us. When this mind-bug strikes, the attachment is so strong we may manipulate numbers in order to hit quotas, or declare a mission accomplished when in fact it isn't. We search for information that supports the outcome to which we are attached. It is a debilitating problem when it affects how we make decisions. Our feelings and emotional reactions tend to validate our thinking while we seek to justify our thoughts, feelings, desires, and

decisions. We are confident in the truth of our belief system, however flawed.

*4. Closed Mind: The inability to hold and examine two opposing views at the same time and to be closed to perspectives other than ours.* When afflicted with this mind-bug, we shut down mindful evaluation of diversity of thought. In essence, *things are the way I see them because that is the way I see it*. As perpetrators, we may not be aware of doing this. Other times we may be proud of it. We make the self-serving assumption that *we've figured out the way things are*, and anything that challenges our point of view becomes *unthinkable*. It is not that we shoot the critics or fail to listen. We may *listen to others* to prove we are good listeners—unaware that we don't allow ourselves to hold and mindfully examine *two opposing views at the same time*. We shut down true diversity of thought. Once infected, we feel pretty good until the day of reckoning, when we ask: "What was I thinking when I made *that* decision?"

*5. Experience Bias: Believing that future events will occur in a specific way based on our prior experience, and not seeing conditions differ.* Our human reasoning is accompanied by subjective experiences, including our interpretation of our thoughts feelings, desires, and decisions. This has an effect on our recall and objective comparison. Once afflicted, our belief is so strong that we fail to look for contradictory evidence and impute hostile motives to even the most helpful folks who question the relevance of *our experience*.

*6. Status Quo: Sticking to the status quo creates friction that works against new ideas.* Most decisions have a *status quo alternative*, defined as *doing nothing* or *maintaining current mode*. This mind-bug causes us to disproportionately stick with the *status quo* and creates friction that works against the momentum and traction of new ideas, thinking, and options. New evidence that contradicts the *status quo* is cleverly rejected. Defense mechanisms are triggered, and emotions can reach dysfunctional proportions—putting the firm at risk of being displaced by new technology and novel business models. The landscape is littered with the *bankruptcy remains* of such companies.

To advance the *quality* of your thinking, mindfully encourage and evaluate *diversity of thought* while reexamining *policies and beliefs* that serve you well.**LE**

*Larry J. Bloom grew a small family business to $700 million in revenue. He is the author of* The Cure for Corporate Stupidity. *Visit www.curecorporatestupidity.com.*

**ACTION: Beware of these six mind bugs.**

# Three Commitments

*Seek clarity, stability, rhythm.*

**by Tom Endersbe, Jon Wortmann, and Jay Therrien**

ALL EFFECTIVE LEADERS HAVE THEIR own personal style, but they all share one thing in common: *Commitment*. They know what commitments to make to motivate their teammates, build more productive organizations, and be the kind of leaders people want to work with. But what are great leaders committed to?

The *Three Commitments* indicate how people will lead for the future: *Clarity*, *Stability*, and *Rhythm*.

***Our simple leadership model will help you know where to pay attention, so every action you take has the impact you hope for.*** Too many leaders obsess over short-term profits, popularity, and pleasing boards, bosses, and special interests—when they should be obsessing over building lasting relationships and results. The *Three Commitments* dig deep into what leaders must focus on to be exceptional and improve effectiveness:

• *Clarity:* Creating a *common understanding* of what success looks like

• *Stability:* Providing resources people need and building a *culture of trust*

• *Rhythm:* Fostering a flow of work and an environment that feels natural

It's simple—but not easy. Globalization, competition, and shrinking margins are making it tougher than ever to operate without deep engagement from every member of every team. The solution is a tenacious dedication to a straightforward way of leading that produces the outcomes you need and turns every teammate into a fellow leader, too.

The *Three Commitments* show how to become a leader people want to follow, by guiding leaders through the stages of creating an effective and efficient workplace in which all employees are engaged and successful. This, in turn, creates the positive impact, trust, and bottom-line impact that organizations strive to achieve in today's difficult environment.

## Do You Have Clarity?

We present a checklist for leaders, and workers, looking to gauge their clarity. Finding clarity is the starting point to fulfilling any leadership commitment. To build a team in which culture is something people want to be a part of, we have to be able to live the commitments for ourselves before we can have a true impact on others. Clarity begins with the consciousness of what we know and what we don't.

Hold clarity as a lens to any situation, and you know if you or your people have it or not. And there are specific areas of our lives as leaders where we believe every leader needs to be clear in order to be the kind of person people want to follow.

Ask yourself three questions:

*1. What do I want?* We often think leaders are supposed to lead for noble reasons. We won't be fired up if what we're doing is someone else's cause; it has to be *our purpose* too. If we haven't been honest about what we want, how can anyone on our team be honest?

*2. Why is the place where I'm leading important?* The *cause* is not enough, but it matters. Even if we're working in an organization almost by accident, within the purpose of the organization are reasons that we can own. Even if you don't *love* the place you work or what you're working on, there are still aspects of the experience you can invest in. Leaders find important work to do.

*3. Why do I lead?* It doesn't matter how powerful our storytelling is or how compelling the case studies about organizations will be—if you don't know why you lead, you'll stop. You'll have to stop because you're going to face challenges, moments, or possibly years where what to do next isn't entirely clear. And knowing why you lead is the fuel to keep going.

With *clarity* about *what you want, the value of the place you lead*, and *why you are a leader*, you'll not only be unstoppable in your life, your clarity will be absorbed by the people around you. They'll commit to clarity because you did, and *keep leading when you can't.* **LE**

*Tom Endersbe is CEO of Endersbe, Herron and Associates. Jon Wortmann is a consultant and coauthor of* Mastering Communication at Work. *Jay Therrien coaches leaders. They are authors of* The Three Commitments of Leadership *(McGraw Hill) and* The Best Leader in the World.

***ACTION: Make these three commitments.***

# Developing Leaders

*Groom people for key positions.*

**by Duane Albro**

STRATEGIC THINKING, having the right team in place, keeping that team aligned and taking risks help make a company and its leadership team successful. In an executive role, communication is vital, but so is recognizing that *what you do impacts others*.

At WVT Communications Group, we look for four *bigger* traits:

• *Strategic thinking.* This is the ability to instinctively conduct SWOTs and develop high-level business strategies.

• *Leadership* refers to the ability to clearly articulate these strategies and plans, and then rally a team to put the plans in motion and achieve goals.

• *Servant leadership* is extending yourself to support and nurture others. For example, we hold training sessions or lunch-and-learn sessions. When looking for the *servant leadership* trait, we look to see what the leader does to ensure that all employees who are supposed to be there are there, that everyone has a seat, everyone can hear. It comes down to caring enough about someone else to ensure they are in the best position to participate or learn. In any leadership position, *people skills* is one of the biggest assets you can have.

• *360.* The *360* is about how well you deal with others (*Sandbox 101*—how well do you play in the sandbox with others). For example, within your box, are you candid and open? With your peers, are you collaborative? Do you care about your team and subordinates? Do you help train and develop them? This is similar to *situational leadership* whereby a leader's style is tailored to the people they are interacting with and, by doing so, they get the best performance from an individual.

## Demonstrating Leadership

These same characteristic traits can also be used to demonstrate leadership:

• *Engage in strategic thinking.* Think through the critical items that you need to accomplish with an instinctive SWOT analysis, translate ideas and conclusions into solid plans, and then communicate those plans to your team.

• *Select the right team.* If employees lack the right skills and abilities to

accomplish the tasks, total buy-in to what has to be done, and total commitment to implementing those plans, you won't accomplish much.

• *Keep your team aligned.* Keep the team focused on the key tasks needed to achieve goals/objectives, and provide them with feedback on how they are doing. If they clearly know what's expected, focus on key tasks, and are kept informed of what they are achieving as a team, they'll succeed.

• *Take risks.* People who play it safe rarely succeed big—so take risks.

• *Be a Thinker-Doer.* Some people are *thinkers* who can quickly identify the root cause of problems, look at outside environmental issues, and brilliantly analyze what things they need to do to address those issues; however, they aren't always capable of action. Doers, on the other hand, have the mindset, "Tell me what you want me to do, and I will get it done." Doers need someone to develop the plan, but they can easily execute it. *Thinker-doers are people who can do both*—they are the most valuable—and they make the best leaders.

• *Walk the talk: be a role model.* What you do impacts others around you. Things don't have to be done in your style, as long as you clearly articulate what has to be done. For example, when I hold a meeting, I tell all participants what the topics will be and how long I expect the meeting to last. And I expect my colleagues and employees to do the same with the people they hold meetings with, but possibly in a different fashion that suits them.

*We groom our people for leadership positions in many ways.* For example, in our *formal management development process*, we evaluate every employee based on their *performance* and *potential* for advancement. The latter is based on *performance* and *individual management skills and abilities*. Then, the leadership team decides *who should be advanced*, now or in the future. If we identify a person as *having potential for a leadership position*, we assign them to a formal mentoring program where they receive hands-on executive training. We might put them on special projects to see how they handle the group.

Develop your team, stay in touch with your team, and have open communications. Constantly monitor and track the results of your actions. If a strategy isn't working, change it. If you set goals, strive to attain them. **LE**

*Duane Albro is CEO of WVT Communications Group (www.wvtcg.com), the parent company of leading cloud communications pioneers. Email: d.albro@wvtcg.com.*

**ACTION: Groom people for leadership positions.**

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# See the Big Picture

*Cash, profits, assets, growth, people.*

### by Kevin Cope

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE enables everyone to build profitable companies and focus on *five drivers of success*: *cash*, *profits*, *assets*, *growth*, and *people*.

Many leaders want their businesses to perform better. What they need is *business acumen*. Focusing on *five key drivers* enables them to understand how to make money and sustain profitable growth. The best leaders understand the essence of how a company makes money, and they use this knowledge in making their decisions. Leaders who exercise their business acumen tend to see the big picture, and make better, smarter, and faster decisions that drive sustainable and profitable growth. They learn how to speak the language of business as fluently as they speak the language of their department or function.

Complexity is the underlying challenge in business. A small problem in one area can ripple throughout the company. The secret to cutting through this complexity lies in understanding the *five key drivers*. Seeing the big picture will help you grasp how these five drivers interact to build great companies.

We tend to become specialized and focus on the specific parts of our jobs, such that we fail to see the *big picture*—how what we do fits into the goal of helping the company make money, achieve strategic objectives, and be profitable. Focusing on *the five key drivers* enables everyone to understand how their organizations operate, make money, and sustain profitable growth.

While each driver is unique, it also depends on all other drivers. You can't affect one without influencing the performance of another. Leaders have to take the connections between the drivers into account in making decisions, or risk running their business into the ground. Employees, too, need to understand the five drivers in order to think strategically, communicate effectively, and enhance their career opportunities.

• *Cash.* Cash is the fuel that drives a business and enables it to pay its bills, pay its employees, and buy the goods it needs to produce the products or services it sells. I show how to evaluate the three key components of cash—*cash position*, *cash flow*, and *liquidity*—and detail what leaders need to know about generating cash as well as how to use it wisely to spur growth.

• *Profit.* Profit is the difference between how much you make by selling goods and services and how much it costs to produce and sell them. I clarify the differences between profit and cash flow, and explore *profit margin*, which reveals how efficiently a company is turning revenue into profit. I detail the benefits and risks of varying approaches to growing sales revenue and reducing costs.

• *Assets.* Assets include everything a company uses to produce revenue—whether it's *tangible*, like buildings and equipment, or *intangible*, like patents. Every enterprise struggles to balance *asset strength*—which enables companies to meet obligations, take advantage of opportunities, and survive tough times—with *asset utilization* necessary to produce revenue and sustain growth.

• *Growth.* *Constant change* is a reality, and *growth* is one of the only ways to handle it. After explaining how *growth* is measured in terms of both *revenue* and *profit*, I address how it can be achieved, by internal expansion (opening new stores, selling new products) and by merger or acquisition.

• *People.* People make the decisions, supply the financial resources, buy the products, and provide the labor and services. They drive cash, profit, assets, and growth. Meeting, exceeding, and *anticipating* the wants, needs, and expectations of your employees, customers, and other key stakeholders is essential to your financial success.

In addition to real-world examples, I use the *fictional story* of **Austin's Cycle Shop**—it evolves from a *one-man store* to a *local chain* to a *nationwide, public company*. And I demystify **financial statements**, simplifying the *income statement*, *balance sheet*, and *statement of cash flows*.

As a leader, you need to know how a profitable organization operates, and **see the big picture** to build a great company and great career. **LE**

*Kevin Cope is CEO of Acumen Learning, trusted advisor to leaders, speaker, and author of* Seeing the Big Picture *(Greenleaf). Visit www.acumenlearning.com.*

**ACTION: See and share the big picture.**

# Real Leaders

*Inspire and earn respect.*

### by Ritch K. Eich

**B**OSSES ARE NOT IN short supply—we all have one. But *real leaders* are elusive. We all encounter leadership behaviors or organizational policies that we respect or admire. Conversely, we've also seen or have suffered firsthand from bosses with behaviors and policies that are ineffective, counterproductive, and offensive.

Forget micromanagement, rigid rules and regulations, sharp cuts to cope with tough times, and harsh criticisms of others. *Real leaders inspire, teach, and mentor others to achieve their professional and personal goals. Real leaders are made; they learn through trial and error, and are nurtured and developed through time.* In most cases, leadership skills are honed in the battlefield of life, where leaders discover their drive, passion, and wisdom. With *job satisfaction* at a low level and managers complaining about *lack of leadership* from above, motivation and direction wane, suggesting a *lack of real leadership*.

We're often taught *to boss*, not *to lead*; hence, bosses are the more prevalent role models. Rarer is the individual who inspires others with focus, trust, humanity, strategic know-how and an instinct for choosing *what is most important* and mobilizing people.

*Real leaders* don't *boss*—they're calm in their style, yet have zero tolerance for *bullies* who undermine performance and morale. Real leaders have a central compass—they aspire to do what's right and be a part of *something bigger than themselves*. They communicate with clarity, honesty, and directness, and listen. Their passion translates into a strong culture. They value and support everyone they lead, out front and behind the scenes. They know when to get out of the way. They are accessible —they are humble, easily approached. Real leaders know that it takes both character and integrity to succeed.

## Elements and Examples

Let's look at certain elements of real leadership and cite examples.

• *Achievement:* Real *leaders*, while not unaware of short-term results, have a laser-like concentration on long-term trends, long-term results, and on-going success (a *boss* is too concerned about the next quarter's bottom line to have a big-picture perspective). They have development programs in place that invest in their employee's learning and future growth. P&G's Bob McDonald and his predecessor A.G. Lafley place a premium on LD and innovation, as have GE's Jack Welch and Jeff Immelt.

• *Associates:* Real *leaders* seek proximity to employees, whether the firm has 40 employees or 40,000. Through various means, *they stay connected* with staff and connect directly with the board, shareholders, customers, suppliers, and employees. They listen and respond in a thoughtful and humble manner that values people. A *boss* pays lip service to employees but is more focused on his own well-being. Bosses see employees as a means to an end. Real leaders are champions of their associates. Former Southwest co-founder, Chairman and CEO Herb Kelleher was superb at this.

• *Example:* Real leaders don't ask more of their people than they ask of them-



selves. They volunteer first; they show the way. As Lao Tzu wrote, "*To lead people, walk beside them.*" Former 'Jiffy' Mix (Chelsea Milling) CEO Howard Holmes and his son (current CEO "Howdy" Holmes) are among the best.

• *Humility:* Real leaders show their *humanity* and *vulnerability*. They're comfortable in their own skin. They care about their people, respect them, and are positive, upbeat and optimistic despite the challenges they face. A *boss* often smiles up and frowns down the organization. The Navy's Grace Hopper wrote, "*Leadership is a two-way street— loyalty up and loyalty down*. Respect for one's superiors; care for the crew."

• *Conflict:* Real *leaders* know that *conflict is inevitable*, but seek to resolve disputes and *channel conflict to constructive ends*, showing congeniality and respect to everyone, regardless of rank. A boss is pleasant and charming to executives, while indifferent or demeaning toward employees. *A boss often creates conflict*, and then handles it poorly, resulting in bad feelings, lost productivity, and, lingering resentment. Former St. Joseph Mercy Hospital CEO Bob Laverty redirected conflict to productive ends.

• *Conduct:* Real *leaders* set values that don't permit inappropriate behavior. A *boss* may engage in demeaning, disrespectful, or verbally abusive behavior. Real *leaders* create a culture that describes *exemplary performance* along with *acceptable* and *unacceptable* behaviors. When procedures governing conduct are set and followed in performance reviews, demeaning or disrespectful behaviors usually stop. I once heard GE's CEO Jack Welch state that no GE employee should be misled in thinking that his or her performance was fine if it wasn't. He believes the lack of candor is unfair to the employee and employer.

• *Balance:* Real *leaders* realize that their employees enjoy a private and personal life and appreciate the need to maintain a work/life balance for well-being and productivity. A *boss* overloads his team with many tasks and impossible due dates, then micromanages them. When you feel a genuine sense of belonging, that your leaders value you and your contribution, that you're a part of a dedicated team; when the Herculean effort is not a weekly routine to make your boss look good to his superiors, you can embrace the challenge enthusiastically. A real leader also knows that employee recognition must be done in a way that further solidifies the team. A boss' eye is upward and fails to consider the necessity of work-life balance. Former Steelcase CEO Frank Merlotti expected people to take their full vacation because they perform better.

• *Results:* Real leaders remove obstacles that impede productivity. They are artful and *have their employee's back*. They expedite processes and ensure the person or team has the tools or resources to do their jobs. *A boss may create roadblocks* that slow the timetable or create extra work or added problems that the person or team has to resolve. Former Chair of Pediatrics at Riley Hospital for Children, Dr. Richard Schreiner, was a master leader, a strong advocate for *doing the right things in the right way*.

Beyond crafting a *clear vision*, leaders create a culture that enables all to flourish, setting *high standards* of conduct and identifying *unacceptable behaviors*.

Real leaders have leadership development programs that teach *bosses* how to become *leaders*, shifting the attitude from *domination* to *empowerment*. LE

*Ritch K. Eich, Ph.D., is author of* Real Leaders Don't Boss *(Career Press). Visit www.eichassociated.com.*

*ACTION: Inspire people and earn their respect.*

# Are We Having Fun Yet?

*Debunk six myths that may kill your joy.*

**by Sharon Jordan-Evans and Beverly Kaye**

THE ECONOMY LIGHTS ARE BACK ON—or at least flickering. So how's your workplace now? One manager said, "I used to enjoy coming to work. We had a lot of fun—a lot of laughs. That was before a recession, downsizing and the prevalent *do more with less* mentality. What can I do to bring back some of the fun—for my team and for me?"

**When was the last time you had a good laugh at work?** Last year? Last month? Last week? Yesterday? If it was *yesterday*, you're probably grinning. If your answer was *last month* (or year!) you might increase the fun quotient.

A *fun-filled workplace* builds enthusiasm, which leads to increased productivity, better service, positive attitudes, and talent loyalty and longevity.

If fun at work is a good thing, why are so many workplaces *fun-free zones*? In part, because times have changed and the workload is heavier. And, in part, because of misplaced beliefs or *six fun myths*. Which of these myths do you believe in? Notice how managers debunked each of these myths.

**Myth 1: Professionalism and fun are incompatible.** Most concern about *having fun at work* is concern about inappropriate humor, loud behavior, or poor timing. If employees' timing is off or their behavior is embarrassing or disruptive, give them that feedback (as you would about any work behavior).

Slapstick silliness (pie-in-the-face humor) will not fit well in a business-suit environment. But there are appropriate ways to get some kicks in even the most buttoned-up workplace. Find ways that fit for you and your team.

"*Every month we had client reports due and most of us dreaded the solitary extra-hours work that the task required. So we started planning to stay late one night each month. We went to a deli for snacks and then held a work party. We were all on our own computers in our own offices, but we took regular breaks, helped each other, enjoyed our meal together, and had some laughs in the after-work casual environment. It not only made the monthly task much more enjoyable, but it provided a type of team building.*"

**Myth 2: It takes toys and money to have fun.** When we asked dozens of people to reflect on fun times they remembered having at work, we heard mostly of examples that did not cost money or involve toys.

• "No specific time. It was just the day-to-day laughter my colleagues and I shared—mostly about small things."

• "Spontaneous after-work trips to the local pizza parlor."

• "Verbal sparring with my brainy, funny colleagues."

• "When we had a huge project, a tight deadline, and we had to work all



night. I wouldn't want to do that often, but we had a good time, laughs in the middle of the night, and a thrill when we finished the project."

"*We decorated one of my employee's offices for his birthday. We used five bags of confetti from the shredding machine. We laughed a lot and still talk about that day.*"

**Myth 3: Fun means laughter.** Fun often does involve laughter or smiles. Sometimes people just need to take themselves less seriously. But people can have fun at work without laughing or getting silly. An intriguing project or collaboration with great teammates can truly be fun. Work that is meaningful and makes a difference can be fun. Building something new can be fun.

"*I managed a team of engineers, and the most fun I had was in the early days of creating a new form of airplane—building something that would make a difference. It was difficult and challenging but much fun.*"

**Myth 4: You have to plan for fun.** Planned fun makes sense sometimes. The employee softball team provides fun and requires planning, as does an occasional employee picnic or the annual holiday party. But a lot of fun in the workplace is spontaneous.

"*We had worked hard and nailed all of our goals for the quarter. I called my team into my office and presented them with movie tickets—for the two o'clock show, that day! It was great. We took off as a group and felt like kids, playing hooky from school. It was spontaneous—they loved it.*"

Unplanned fun can be as simple as showing up at the staff meeting with muffins for everyone, asking a group of employees to join you for lunch at a new restaurant, or taking an unplanned coffee break to just sit and talk about families or hobbies.

**Myth 5: Fun time at work will compromise our results.** Many managers feel that every minute spent chuckling is a minute lost toward *bottom-line results*. But fun-loving cultures are *more productive*. A fun break can reenergize people and ready them for concentrated effort.

"*My employees take breaks when they want. Some surf the Web or play games on their computers. They say that these breaks clear their minds so that when they return to the project, they are fresher and sharper.*"

You might be thinking, "If I allow my employees to surf the Web during work, they will never get their work done." Maybe you believe that only exceptional employees can be trusted to that degree. The secret to allowing fun at work is to be crystal clear with your employees about their performance goals. Co-create measurable and specific goals with them, then evaluate their performance using those goals.

**Myth 6: You have to have a good sense of humor (or be funny) to create a fun workplace.** Some of you just aren't funny. In fact, many terrific bosses are not necessarily funny (or even very fun-loving). In many cases, they simply allow others' humor and playfulness to come out. They support rather than create fun at work. Let others initiate the kicks if fun is not your strength.

"*I'm task-oriented and serious most of the time. One time I dressed up for Halloween, and my employees were shocked. That was a real stretch for me. Most of the time I just let them have their fun, without judging or squelching it.*"

**Experience proves it**: fun enhances creativity, and does not diminish productivity when work goals are clear. Let fun happen—it will energize, motivate, and keep talented people on your team.  **LE**

**ACTION: Debunk the six myths and have fun.**

# Bad Management

*Beware these habits or methods.*

**by André de Waal**

IF YOU HOPE TO RUN A High-Performance Organization (HPO), you need to recognize the signs of bad management. If non-HPO managers are not dealt with, an organization can't become excellent. HPO managers never put up with these 10 habits:

• *Bad managers clean up the mess of their predecessors—even when there is no mess.* When appointed in a new position, the bad manager claims that the predecessor has made such a big mess that it will take at least one year to get everything in order; of course, the bad manager cannot possibly work yet on achieving the departmental targets this year—maybe next year too.

• *Bad managers are always busy.* They're involved in so many projects that they lack time to work on regular tasks! And since these projects are *vital* for the success (or so they say), bad managers can't be expected to work on departmental targets. They'll get to that when their pet projects are done (they never are).

• *Bad managers know how to play the goals game.* They know their goals should be *loose,* with *lots of slack,* so targets are easy to achieve. They will never get optimal results; but that doesn't matter to them. *Low performance* is better than risking punishment for falling short of ambitious targets.

• *Bad managers only manage from a distance.* They love to use *performance indicators* since these enable them to practice *hands-off management,* making it easy for them to avoid day-to-day department activities altogether. When things go wrong, they dodge accountability: they weren't there, after all!

• *Bad managers always blame somebody else.* They have a host of excuses when they don't achieve targets. They blame *reports* because *they don't accurately reflect performance* (their reports show that *they did achieve* the targets). Bad managers blame *conditions* (the economy or weather) as the reason they couldn't achieve the targets! They may blame the *weakest colleague.* So they need to hire someone new before they can be expected to achieve their targets.

• *Bad managers make lengthy, impressive plans.* They know that *expansive, wordy,* and *complex* plans impress top management (it gives the impression that they're on top of their game and have thought of everything). They also know that *you can bury many assumptions and preconditions in verbose plans* (safeguards when top management complains that goals aren't met). And since employees won't read or understand these plans, it'll take much time before they can start realizing the plan.

• *Bad managers only communicate in one way.* They may hold an *open forum* for employees to voice concerns, questions, and suggestions. However, they only *feign interest* in employee feedback, and *won't act on what they hear.* Instead, they stick to their plans. If people complain, bad managers use open forums against the participants, claiming that *incompetency* is the fault of everyone.

• *Bad managers only have eyes for the shareholder.* They know who butters their bread: shareholders. So, they work hard to satisfy shareholders, even if this works against the organization's long-term interests.

• *Bad managers are Machiavellians.* They turn to Machiavelli's book, *The Prince* (1513) often for advice on how to practice *divide and conquer* strategies: manipulating colleagues, employees, and bosses. Hence, the targeted members in the organization become preoccupied with *guarding their backs* instead of focusing on *growing the department.*

• *Bad managers have an exit strategy every three years.* When held accountable for their (in)actions, they move on (they often plot their exit strategy in advance and have a fallback to flee to).

These 10 bad habits don't exist in HPOs! Recognize the signs of *bad management* and deal with them quickly.

## Wasteful Practices

The following practices constitute a waste of time and money:

• *Design or structure.* No one design or structure correlates with high performance. It makes no difference whether management chooses a *functional* design, *process* design, or *matrix* design; hence, I can't recommend launching a reorganization to boost performance. In fact, I find that *most reorganizations fail to yield long-term performance improvement.*

• *Autonomy.* Granting more *empowerment* to employees does not necessarily contribute to high performance; in fact, *high autonomy can have a negative correlation.* Too much freedom can lead to an internal disorder and confusion unless backed up with sufficient means of coordination. People want clarity about goals, what is and isn't allowed, and what is expected. If they know this, they won't need further *empowerment.*

• *Strategy.* It's not so much the strategy that's important—but its *uniqueness* compared to competitors. All characteristics concerning *cost leadership, product differentiation* and *customer intimacy* must be *distinguishing characteristics.* Adopting merely a *me-too* strategy is not enough.

• *Technology.* New information and communication (ICT) systems won't necessarily transform enterprises into HPOs. In fact, a stand-alone implementation does nothing to help the organization perform better over time.

• *Benchmarking.* When an organization embarks on a *benchmarking,* it aims to identify *best practices,* emulate them, and attain the same level. HPOs regard competitors' best performance benchmark merely as *the baseline* for performance—a *starting point* from which the HPO distances itself *as much as possible.*

• *Communication.* Leaders often say, "We have to *communicate* more!" However, employees are more concerned about whether or not management is listening to what they have to say. Thus what's critical is *dialogue—two-way communication* with both sides listening and hearing and exchanging ideas and working towards mutual understanding. HPOs spend less effort on *soap-box speeches* and *town hall meetings* and more on *roundtables* and *discussions.*

• *Bonuses and reward systems.* These are *hygiene factors*—not *distinguishing factors* for creating and sustaining HPO status. An organization needs to have a reward system that employees deem to be fair and equitable. Then, it can start becoming *a genuine HPO.*      **LE**

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*ACTION: Avoid these bad habits and practices.*

## Unconventional Leaders

*Learn lessons from Jeremy Lin.*

**by Eric J. Romero**

How can several multi-million dollar basketball teams overlook Jeremy Lin, a dormant star player who was on their own teams? Well, he didn't have any experience as a star. He didn't graduate from a university with a history of producing basketball stars. Additionally, the fact that there aren't many Asian stars in American professional basketball probably played a role too. In other words, according to "conventional basketball wisdom", Jeremy Lin shouldn't be a basketball star!
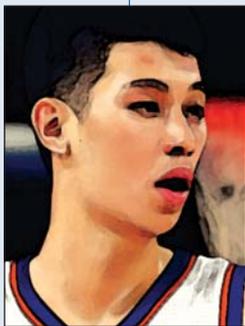
### Conventional Thinking

Unfortunately, conventional wisdom and thinking routinely prevent managers from finding, hiring and/or utilizing star players at companies all around the world. *Experience* and *education* are overused as selection criteria, which hurts innovation and competitiveness.

*Experience is a poor indicator of what was learned in the past and what can be done in the future.* Driving is a good example of how experience often fails to produce learning and expertise. Many people who have been driving for years, and have *ample experience*, are still poor drivers.

The weak relationship between experience and expertise is evident in many organizations as well. Anything that one does admirably today, one did not know how to do in the past, so experience was not a valid predictor of future success. Therefore, for the same reason, it is unreasonable to use experience indiscriminately as a selection criterion.

Organizations depend on new ideas and innovation for survival. Since innovation is by nature something new, prior experience is often irrelevant. Some of the most creative and successful entrepreneurs had no experience at all in their fields when they started their firms.

Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream was started by two friends who knew nothing about the ice cream business. Ted Turner didn't have a journalism education or any experience in the news business when he launched CNN. Richard Branson has created numerous unrelated ventures, which have made him one of the richest men in the world, despite the fact that he did not possess any experience in most aspects of his businesses.

### Unconventional Leaders

*Unconventional leaders are similar to entrepreneurs in that they are willing to try new ideas and take risks in their quest to beat the competition.* They think outside the box, so they find stars with unexpected backgrounds, something their competition would never consider.

What are good selection criteria for finding unconventional thinkers who can work in a dynamic environment? Seeking people who are open to new ideas, have a vision similar to the company's, and are comfortable with ambiguity will yield better results than focusing on how much work experience applicants have or whether they have a university education.

The ability to learn quickly and adapt are both particularly important as well. Each organization should devise its own selection criteria and process that is matched to its culture and strategy. Keep in mind that the process created is not static, it should be adjusted over time.

When using an innovative selection process, it might take much more time to find and select personnel. That is the price to pay for doing things differently. For example, Google interviews are a day long affair, or more. Google is also one of the most unconventional companies in the world.

*Don't make the mistake of the New York Knicks, who discovered Jeremy Lin by chance.* Break with conventional wisdom and do something different when looking for talent. A customized and innovative selection process will help you find and select unconventional thinkers who can help your company beat the competition.

To beat the competition, you first need to *Think Outside the Box* so you can *Compete Outside the Box.* **LE**

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*ACTION: Compete outside the box.*

## Foster Self-Efficacy

*For innovation and growth.*

**by Claudio Feser**

To thrive in today's markets, leaders need to adapt, *continuously innovate,* and keep up with the changes brought by new technologies, evolving customer demands, new competitors, and new regulations. Adaptive organizations are more resilient, as more of their members hold *beliefs* of *self-efficacy*.

Psychologist *Albert Bandura* defined belief of *self-efficacy* as a personal judgment of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations."

*People who doubt their capabilities, who lack self-confidence in specific domains of activity shy away from difficult tasks in those domains*. They have low aspirations and weak focus and commitment to the goals that they pursue. In difficult and taxing situations, they dwell on their *personal deficiencies*, the *formidable nature of the task*, and the *adverse consequences of failure*.

*In contrast, people who have strong beliefs of self-efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided*. They set demanding goals, commit to them and focus on them. *"Other inventors try a few things and quit. I never quit until I get what I want,"* said Thomas Edison.

Fostering self-efficacy can be a powerful tool for *adapting* to changing situations and *out-performing* competition. This has five implications for leaders:

*1. Staff key positions with people who have high self-efficacy.* People who have a positive attitude toward learning and regard *self-efficacy* as an acquirable skill, seek challenges that enable them to expand their knowledge and capabilities. They regard *errors* as a natural part of the learning process and view *setbacks* not as *personal failures* but as *learning experiences*. By contrast, people who view *ability* as an *inherent aptitude* or *endowment* seek tasks that minimize the odds of failure. They become defensive when their work is challenged. Setbacks or negative feedback represent threats and reveal their limitations. They set low goals, and shun opportunities to learn.

The quality of decision-making by managers who view their decision-

making ability as *reflecting inherent cognitive aptitude* deteriorates when they encounter problems. They start setting lower targets, their problem solving becomes erratic, and they achieve less.

**2. Target setting.** The achievement of ambitious goals builds confidence and gets people to set even higher goals. Leaders need to set targets that are *ambitious* so they foster motivation, innovative thinking, and problem solving, but the targets should be still *realistic* and *achievable*. Clearly *unachievable* targets lead to loss of confidence, or to lack of engagement and commitment by those who receive the targets ("*these are not my numbers*," "*not my goals*").

**3. Performance appraisal practices.** Positive *achievements* support the development of *self-efficacy*. However, many firms have performance appraisal systems that foster a low sense of efficacy. Some firms sort employees into ability groups (forced rankings) that diminish the perceived self-efficacy of those in lower rating categories. *Competitive grading practices* convert performance evaluations into experiences in which many are doomed to failure for the success of a few. *Individual performance feedback*—in which the ratings are relative to individual achievements (deviation from budget, degree of individual target achievement, for example)—may develop a more self-confident, adaptive, high-performance culture.

**4. Leadership development.** Leaders may need to receive training to foster *self-efficacy beliefs* in their people. This includes developing the ability to judge the strengths and weaknesses of people, and their attitude to learning, and then selecting the approach best suited to enhance their *self-efficacy*— such as enacting mastery, purposeful role modeling, verbal persuasion, or selecting a job better suited to them.

**5. Training practices.** *Self-efficacy theory* can be applied in redesigning training curricula, leading to *mastery modeling* or *forum and field training* that includes three elements: 1) skills to be taught are modeled by trainers to convey the basic rules and problem-solving strategies; 2) learners carry out guided practice under simulated conditions; and 3) learners apply their new skills in their work situation. This means breaking down the formal teaching into chunks, with time in between for the learners to reflect, experiment, and apply.   **LE**

*Claudio Feser, author of* Serial Innovators: Firms That Change The World *(Wiley), is a Director of McKinsey & Co., leading the McKinsey CEO Network that focuses on CEO training/coaching. Visit www.McKinsey.com.*

**ACTION: Foster self-efficacy in managers/leaders.**

# Making the Shift

*Go from tech expert to leader.*

**by Robert P. Hewes and Alan M. Patterson**

TECHNICAL COMPETENCE IS INSUFFICIENT for success as a leader. Moving from *tech expert* to *leader* represents a unique challenge that is more complex and has far greater impact than adding more technical knowledge. *Leadership* requires transforming *technical competence* into *business success*, acquiring and developing skills and competencies distinct from technical expertise alone.

Technical experts who succeed as leaders make shifts in three areas:

**1. Building and managing key relationships based on credibility and trust.** Anyone starting in their career or taking on new or changed job responsibilities must become proficient at what they do (gain *technical expertise*). Tech experts shine when they show how much they know—and then build a track record for successful performance. Beyond *experts* knowing their stuff, they must provide real value to others because they know what they are talking about, make commitments and deliver on them. By creating credibility and trust, they *shift* into building and managing key relationships.

*Technical expertise* represents *what* the job entails. The shift to *relationship management* represents knowing *who* the players are for which the *what* is critical. The art of developing and managing relationships is not based on depth of knowledge but on the ability to deliver something that is of value to other people. When a tax specialist in Finance provides guidance on how to evaluate a new business opportunity to managers so they can make an informed business decision, the individual shines in a new light. Such success is based on the specialist's skills related to *asking* important questions, *listening*, *communicating* at the level of the audience, *making personal connections*, and *being convincing* at logical and emotional levels. These *emotional intelligence* skills are distinct from ratio-nal intelligence or technical expertise.

**2. Working through others.** In this matrixed, resource-constrained world, tech experts must learn how to work others. Given the pace of change, spiraling complexity and lack of clarity, this shift is well beyond incremental acquisition of *teamwork* skills. *Working though others represents a new way of doing business that pushes on aligning roles, responsibilities, and skill sets with the strategy, processes, and structure*. Effective *execution* means everything from getting buy-in for your ideas, from management to managing projects, to clarifying expectations without a clear direction or mandate. We teach *managing change* as if it were a steady state that one can identify, corral, and define as a course of action. We should teach *continuous flexibility* to keep an eye on the goal, define resources in the critical path (whether they report to you or not), form the team, align and execute. This is teamwork in the absence of standing teams, and it represents a shift into a vital area of leadership competence.

**3. Thinking and acting strategically.** A heads-down management style creates tunnel vision and short-term thinking. Shifting into leadership positions requires the ability to look up and out, beyond the day-to-day activity, with the vision to identify trends and extrapolate from the current reality. This means looking beyond a functional or organization perspective to identify and understand those elements outside the current system. These comprise a set of *business imperatives* that, once internalized, are the basis for the strategy. As professionals we are consumed with *what* and *how*. Strategic thinking requires us to ponder a deeper *why* question.

**The additional value accrued from tech experts is their potential impact as leaders.** Their expertise is the base from which they shift into areas with discreetly different skills and competencies. These skills range from building relationships, to working effectively through others to execute across an ever-changing landscape, to seeing the big picture and aligning or realigning the organization when necessary. Without acquiring and demonstrating these skills, the shift from technical expert to leader is restricted at best.   **LE**

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**ACTION: Make the shift from tech expert to leader.**
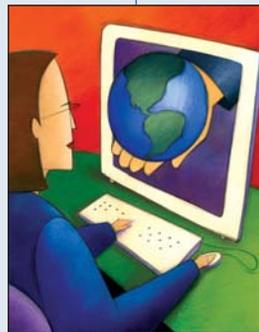
# Needs-Based Leaders

*They gain competitive advantage.*

by Marie R. Miyashiro

EFFECTIVE LEADERS understand personal, team, and organizational needs and can distinguish needs from strategies. Fluency in understanding the needs can be called *empathy*. Many people think empathy is solely about listening to others and understanding their *feelings*. However, they often don't realize the value of *feelings* as *accessible indicators of needs.*

A so-called *negative* feeling indicates an unmet need; a *positive* feeling indicates a met need. At its most effective level, *empathy requires honestly assessing your own feelings and needs and then connecting with the feelings and needs of others.* When both happen, you increase the likelihood of meeting more needs.

In meeting needs, you decrease the likelihood of conflict and improve productivity—and with higher productivity come greater profits.

## Empathy on Three Levels

Effective leaders are skilled in empathy on the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational levels.

*1. Intrapersonal level.* Needs-based leadership first involves being *the leader of your own mind*. It calls for being *self-connected*, with a sense of *personal needs* and *values*. For example, you may have a need for *integrity*, *progress*, *meaning*, or *making a contribution*. Steve Jobs needed to *make a difference in the world* with Apple. *Needs* run far deeper than *wishes*, *wants*, or *requests*. They're powerful motivators. A needs- or values-based perspective helps you *achieve more* in an innovative way. When you become the leader of your own mind, you're less triggered by what you hear or see around you. You have a steady reference point within yourself—a compass by which to navigate change.

Consider **Bill Gore**, founder of W. L. Gore & Associates, creators of Gore-Tex® waterproof material and other technology-driven innovations. Gore held the values of *relationships* and *employee autonomy and cooperation*, a *vision* evident in its website, www.gore.com. For years, W. L. Gore & Associates was considered one of the best places to work.

When you are the leader of your own mind, you can maintain your inner clarity, which your team and organization can then mirror. Take the example of **Nick Swinmurn**, later joined by **Tony Hsieh**, who built Zappos, an online shoe company, into an organization so successful it was bought by Amazon in 2009 and allowed to run as an independent entity. These leaders had a need to *enjoy* their work as well as be financially successful. This led to a culture that not only embraces and drives change, but is known for its fun.

**When you become aware of your feelings, you can begin to discern the needs they indicate.** When you understand your needs—such as *consistency*, *clarity*, *honesty*, *individuality*, *consideration*, *order*—you can make requests of yourself or others to meet those needs, and



when needs are met, productivity rises.

*2. Interpersonal level.* The interpersonal aspect of empathy is how leaders *engage* with their team. What qualities do people want most from their leaders. Rather than wanting vision, purpose, drive, or wisdom from their leaders, people most wanted trust, compassion, stability, hope, honesty, integrity, respect, and empathy.

*Connecting* with others and seeing what's going on for them and being (as well as being perceived as) someone who cares about the human side of the equation are attributes of authentic leaders. People want and expect it.

**As a leader, you can help bring out and meet the needs of others**, which in turn, increases productivity and leads to collaboration and a sense of being connected to others and to a shared purpose. Needs involved in interaction between leader and team include *trust*, *respect*, and *collaboration*. Those three are enhanced and encouraged by *empathic connections*. Team leaders who can discern the feelings and needs (values)

beneath what is said can create mutual respect and trust with their team members. Failure to do so is much more likely to foster misunderstandings.

*3. Organizational level.* The leader's role is to facilitate a shared understanding of six basic organizational needs: the three Source needs of *Identity*, *Life-Affirming Purpose*, and *Direction*, and the three Leveraging needs of *Structure*, *Energy*, and *Expression*.

Zappos began as an online purveyor of quality shoes and since expanded its line of products, thus morphing its *Identity* while maintaining its promise of quality. Clearly, the *core value* that drives the company is *over-the-top customer service*. Because of the company's clarity and consistency about this core value of its *Identity* and *Life-Affirming Purpose*, its growth has been *exponential*.

An organization's *Identity* and *Life-Affirming Purpose* (why it exists) must be guided by its *Direction* (where it's going). These needs are supported by its *Structure*, driven by its *Energy* (profit, morale, and technology), and manifest through its *Expression* (unique position in the marketplace and world).

## Needs Versus Strategies

In every interaction, the empathic approach is: *Connect-Think-Act*. In the *Connect* phase, you discover your values/needs; in the *Think* phase, you plan strategies based on your needs; in the *Act* phase, *you implement your strategies*.

*Followers* tend to work from a *strategy-based perspective*, skipping the *Connect* phase; true *leaders* work from a needs-based perspective. This is beneficial since conflict occurs only at the strategy level, not at the needs level.

When leaders coalesce people around needs, they decrease the odds of conflict and increase productivity.

**Leaders facilitate the creation of a system that leads to more empathic connection with the customer**—a way to systematically track and understand the customer's needs. The information is gathered from and shared with *the entire organization*. This is how your efforts can lead to system change.

Your *needs-based approach* to leadership can effectively drive strategy, team productivity, marketing, product and program development, and sales since it facilitates collaboration, innovation, and managing changes in the market and workplace. The approach is based on the *Nonviolent Communication Process.* LE

*Marie R. Miyashiro, APR is president of Elucity Network, an empathy-based training firm, and author of* The Empathy Factor. *Visit www.EmpathyFactorAtWork.com.*

*ACTION: Become a needs-based leader.*

# Leader Slippage
### Boost exemplary behavior.

**by Irving H. Buchen**

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE no official rules of executive behavior, there is the need to codify some basics. Indeed, it falls to CEOs to do so, since they bear the burden of preserving the image of the office. It even may serve as their **code of executive ethics**.

Over the years, seven principles of exemplary behavior have emerged. Although they do not have the binding force of commandments, they do generally enjoy universal observance.

**1. No retaliation.** Don't be tempted to get even—to diverting your course no matter how slightly to engage in pay-back. *You are not in charge of the score card*. Adam Smith is. And later if tit-for-tat does not come out in your favor, learn to forget and forgive— that will dispel *the demon of revenge*.

**2. No gloating.** Do not enjoy a competitor's demise. There but for sake of cash flow and a solid board go you. Also do not take any pleasure in the short tenure of another CEO. Sadly the numbers are not in your favor either. *Above all, study slippage—the law of crash is slip.* The bridge has been collapsing and the CEO falling gradually, slowly, silently, since the first day.

**3. No crowing.** A number of quarters in the black, turnaround sales, healthy dividends—great, but don't crow. In your heart of hearts you know both how indispensable and incidental you have been to such success. It is not modesty but honesty that persuades you to accept the key executive role as that of a supreme intermediary—at best, a nexus negotiator, bridge builder, or transition facilitator.

**4. No greed.** Although *there are no limits to how much the business can take out of you*, there are limits to *how much you can take out of the business*. This lopsided arrangement ultimately preserves balance and works in your favor because it curbs the excess of your own importance. Your may be better than *Joe Rank and File* but how much better? 5 times? 10 times? 100 times? Greed is bad math.
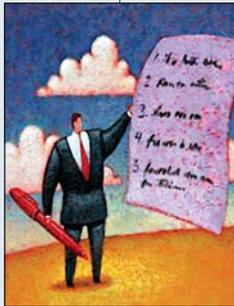
**5. No dishonesty.** Be a *straight shooter*. Don't keep two sets of books. Don't misfile to mystify. Don't be clever in public. Don't play the role of the artful dodger. Don't ever choose profit over fault, image over error. Imagine appearing before a senate investigating committee—better yet, give them no reason for summoning you in the first place.

**6. No narcissism.** Do not try to be a legend in your own time, telling and retelling stories about your triumphs, being stingy about admitting luck and being in the right place at the right time. Above all, avoid the image of being always wise, right, infallible. Hubris has infinite patience.

**7. No complaining:** about being *unappreciated* or *unloved*; about *working 24/7 and 365*; about *government regulatory restraints* and *ethical behavior oversight*—often excesses brought them on. Learn to work in harness, being muzzled on occasion, appreciate stoicism, even silence. Being CEO is hard enough without deflective asides coming back to haunt you. Behavior should always be lean and clean. Spartan and generous. Restraint begets resilience. What the CEO says should be of a piece with the way he behaves. Watch yourself in action; remember, you are a double mirror.

**You may consider yourself special**—not part of the crowd —*extraordinary*. And, you see your difference as *defining*— as having the staying and shaping power to set you apart and determine who you are, what you become, and how you achieve distinction.

*Intelligence* guides all that the leader is, all that he chooses, and all that he seeks to do. *Intelligence is doubly applied* —to the leader and what he leads—to ego and to enterprise—to the role of leader and how it plays it self out. *Why?* Leaders must take care of themselves. Obsessed by protocol, they're political and wary. The difficulty of *getting there* is compounded by that of *staying there*.

**The leader is always a self-server and self-preserver**. Ultimately the task of *leadership intelligence* is to keep you focused, lest you make decisions based on ego rather than vision, on politics rather than strategy. Indeed, here intelligence finds its most persuasive work: adjusting and leveraging situations and decisions and functioning as an internal executive coach.     **LE**

*Irving H. Buchen, Capella University, St Clements University. Email ibuchen@msn.com.*

**ACTION: Display intelligent, exemplary behavior.**

# Work-Life Balance
### We still misinterpret the idea.

**by Chip R. Bell**

THE ODD PHRASE, *Work-life balance*, implies that *work* is different than *life*. The phrase might have been coined by some *take this job and shove it* angry worker forced to leave his brain and soul in the parking lot. More apt labels might be *work-play balance* or *work-family balance*. I wonder if Einstein, Edison or Michael Jordan ever worried about being *out of balance*.

The phrase also suggests that if you are working *too much*, you'll be stressed or depressed. When we say *get a life*, we refer to a person who is obsessing on something. But, *stress does not come from doing what you love*—no matter how long the hours or arduous the task.

*Work life balance* is a red herring—a label used to apply to *unhealthy anxiety* found among people who also work in ways that are far beyond norms of time or intensity. But, **meaningful work does not produce stress**. When passion-filled work yields stress-related afflictions, it's because work is done in a context that restricts or denies accomplishment, productivity, and quality. It is the championship racecar driver forced to work with an inferior engine or a slow pit crew, or a top quarterback poorly supported by team members/coaches.

**Work never happens in a vacuum**. Even a lone and zealous cobbler relies on a leather supplier, the landlord of his shop, plus a setting that insures the freedom to obtain a fare wage for his work. Surrounding the work is the context in which it's performed.

## Three Hostile Conditions

Three conditions add stress:

**1. Absence of responsible freedom.** Some leaders interpret *empowerment* to mean *unlimited license*; some *abdication of any direction or guidance*. The *inmates running the asylum* extreme is built on the assumption that the issue is *power* and *authority*. But, *empowerment* is not about *authority*—it is about *trust*. When workers toil in a setting that communicates, "You are not trusted" or "Your work is not respected," they feel *undervalued*. In a brain-based economy, it's easy for workers to link their identity to their work. When *work* is about *who*

*a person is*, stress comes from laboring long and hard on an endeavor only to experience it being unrecognized.

**2. Debilitating intra-unit conflict.** The museum was a wonderful haven for artists. It was an exhibit hall, classroom, and studio. Artists came to paint or sculpt, to teach or be taught, and to display their work. Artists and employees were often at the museum late and weekends, passionately at work. But, it all became a cauldron of stress, when the mayor decided the museum needed *strict supervision*. Inspectors kept a tight leash on *health hazards*. The social service office brought distracting publicity when someone reported an artist's teenage daughter did her homework in the same room in which a semi-nude model posed for art students. The beloved museum closed rather than *fight city hall*. Stress often comes, not from the team in which a worker is a member, but *a team on which a worker relies.* When the entity nearby fails to cooperate or act collaboratively, it adversely impacts the quality and productivity of work passionately performed. Many organizations have their own version of *city hall* squabbling over issues of control, bragging rights, turf, or territory—and the *emotional noise* adds strain.

**3. Constricted decision-making.** Work teams depend on decisions made at higher levels. When decision-making is constricted, progress slows and stress increases. When decision-making comes with excessive conflict and microscopic analysis, stress is a byproduct. Or, if decision-making is so faulty it threatens quality and puts at risk work devotedly performed, those whose fingerprints are on the work feel cheated out of their chance to give the fruits of their efforts a fair chance. Wise decision making is more than reflective of input from others—it is anchored to fact-based considerations. Once made, decisions need to be communicated quickly with those relying on them for their work. Anything short of these conditions robs workers of the capacity to deliver.

Poor *work life balance* is rarely caused by people working too hard or long—it's about how they're treated. Every leader wants *workers* who are like *warriors*—passionate, committed, focused, and go the extra mile to get superior results. But, when warriors are asked to be gladiators, their passion turns into pain and their talents to tensions. **LE**

*Chip R. Bell is a customer loyalty consultant and the author of several best-selling books including a book coauthored with John Patterson,* Wired and Dangerous: How Your Customers Have Changed and What to Do about It. *Visit www.chipbell.com.*

**ACTION: Turn your workers into warriors.**

# Great Coaching

*Top 10 outcomes and mistakes.*

### by Bryn Meredith

CHALLENGING QUEStions, affirming feedback and fresh insights make coaching an often exhilarating process. How can we coach and develop leaders who have the head to think for themselves, the voice to inspire their organization, the heart to serve others and the courage to act when others will not?

Is your coaching making a real difference in the work or career of the person being coached? There is only one way to measure the effectiveness of coaching—and that is by measuring the outcomes of coaching.

## Top 10 Coaching Outcomes

*What are the Top 10 Outcomes of Great Coaching?* We ask this question to challenge a leader's thinking about coaching and identify ways to increase their personal effectiveness. To identify the top 10 outcomes, we ask this question: *Has the person you are coaching*:

1. Raised their standards of performance and career ambitions to scary heights.

2. Redesigned how their precious time, attention and energy are invested.

3. Eliminated those once-important practices and habits that no longer serve them well.

4. Challenged and laid bare their closely-held beliefs and assumptions.

5. Set unbelievably ambitious goals for themselves

6. De-junked their lives of incessant time-wasters, stresses and distractions.

7. Gained a greatly enlarged view of their amazing *strengths* and *capabilities*.

8. Confronted and slayed the principal demons that had been blocking their way forward.

9. Rediscovered their playful, creative side that had been held in exile.

10. Re-acquired a radical passion for work, life and the well-being of others.

If you can answer yes to at least seven out of 10, then you are well on your way to providing great leadership coaching.

## Top 10 Coaching Mistakes

We all make mistakes. Even the very best coaches make mistakes. However what distinguishes these coaches is that they readily recognize these mistakes and take immediate corrective action. Additionally, they minimize the impact of any coaching mistakes by having noble intention (always doing what is best for the person being coached and being their fiercest advocate). Here are the *Top Ten Coaching Mistakes*:

**1. Trying to be a great coach**—focus instead, and put your energy into helping the person being coached become great.

**2. Working too hard**—it's your job to challenge the person being coached to do the hard work.

**3. Not saying what needs to be said**—always walk away empty knowing that nothing important was left unsaid.

**4. Neglecting to ask the person being coached how you can be most helpful**—you do not own the agenda, the person being coached does.

**5. Assuming the person being coached is a challenge to overcome or a problem to be fixed.** Coaching is not a project but rather a special relationship and conversation.

**6. Talking too much.** Silence and attentive listening are some of the most powerful coaching tools.

**7. Owning the outcome.** The person being coached owns both the success and the failures; you don't.

**8. Giving well-meaning advice.** This is a very weak form of coaching that makes the coach feel good but does little for the person being coached.

**9. Steering the conversation towards the path you know is best.** The person being coached is resourceful, creative and perfectly capable of finding their own best path forward.

**10. Finishing without a commitment.** Insist that the person being coached promises to advance their cause in some way.

Again, the ultimate aim of coaching is to develop leaders who have the head to think for themselves, the voice to inspire their organization, the heart to serve others, and the courage to act when others will not. **LE**

*Bryn Meredith is VP of Bluepoint Leadership. Email brynmeredith@bluepointleadership.com or visit www.bluepointleadership.com.*

**ACTION: Provide great leadership coaching.**

# Culture and Performance

*Healthy cultures are high performance cultures.*
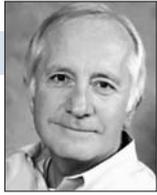
**by Doug Williamson**

Is your culture help-ing or hurting your chances for success? The quality of the culture matters. Leaders have ultimate responsibility for shaping the culture, but they must be good stewards of it as well and manage for long-term consequences. The only way to judge leaders' commitment to a healthy, sustainable and robust culture is to examine their choices—including where they put *culture* on their list of priorities.

The decisions we make and the results we achieve all relate to the health of the culture. Bad habits are developed in good times; good habits are developed in bad times.

There may be no one, single, definitive answer to achieving high performance; there are, however, some broad guidelines that are worth baking into the cultural profile.

I like the framework (based on one created by Booz Inc.) called *Organizational DNA*. It suggests there are *four interwoven strands of DNA* that can be decoded to help diagnose the state of a culture: *Structure and effectiveness:* Is the organization structured in a way that enables performance? *Decision-making:* Are the *decision rights* clearly vested? *Knowledge transfer:* Does information get from *those who have it* to *those who need it*? *Motivators and differentiators:* What tools are used to guide/direct behavior?

## Healthy Cultures

The DNA of a *healthy culture* can't be reduced to one set of attributes or principles. Context must be taken into account, and it's vital to have the culture aligned with the context. There are three categories of *healthy cultures*:

• *Just-in-time model.* This culture focuses on seizing opportunities, being quick to change course and head off in a new direction when the winds of change indicate an advantage.

• *Military precision model.* This organization is responsive to *commands* from top leaders who can quickly galvanize the troops into perfect alignment and then fly in formation.

*Resilient model.* This enterprise can ride over rough patches and come away from the experience better or stronger. *Ego* isn't allowed to blur *vision*.

## Unhealthy Cultures

Since organizations are dynamic entities, they suffer from the same flaws, imperfections, obsessions and biases as do the people who work in them and the leaders who guide them. The dysfunctions are many and varied. There are, however, a few basic *pathologies*—four categories of unhealthy cultures:

• *Over-managed model.* This organization builds in levels of supervision and prefers endless analysis and talk to action and results.

• *Outgrown model.* This organization is hanging on—and the stress and strain are high. It's controlled by a few people who *micromanage* it.

• *Fits-and-starts model.* This organization has energy and talent, but can't stay the course on anything it starts. The attention span of its leaders is short.

• *Passive-aggressive model.* This firm suffers from what Jack Welch calls *superficial congeniality*. Things look good on the surface, but just underneath jealousies and bad behaviors run rampant—both ignored and tolerated.

*Why do certain cultures thrive for a short while, some thrive for a long time, and some die a quick and merciful death?* The mindsets, attitudes, belief systems and approach that the organization chooses, make the ultimate difference. Choose well, you thrive. Choose poorly, you die. In either case, the culture that emerges is a choice—not a random set of events. The culture matters a great deal, since the culture—the unspoken, the ephemeral—shapes the view the organization has and defines the choices it entertains.

*Along with the attitudes and beliefs are two attributes that round out the cultural blueprint:* 1) the *Values* espoused and held to be important; and 2) the *Competencies* nurtured to drive performance and build talent. These two attributes ensure the culture is self-sustaining, healthy and productive. Most organizations over-complicate and

over-engineer to hide from the truth that may emerge if they were to focus on the *vital few* and make them visible. *Attitudes and Beliefs* correspond with *character*; and *Values and Competencies* correspond with *competence,* they define the culture and the genetic code, or DNA, that will either allow them to thrive, survive or die. The formula is simple: *Ability + Agility* x *Vitality = Superior Results*.

## Linking Culture and Focus

In our study of culture and high performance, we were amazed by the extent of the *noise*—the cultural equivalent of toxic waste, displaced energy, and lack of focus. Chatter, confusion, speculation and miscommunication all contribute to a loss of value.

A culture that suffers from noise *can't be a focused culture.* A culture that is not focused on the right stuff *cannot aspire to high performance*. A high performance culture *makes crisp focus a competency for all leaders*. A good leader makes focus on the customer—*the critical imperative for everyone.*

*Talented people want to work with other talented people—and will only work for talented leaders*. The *culture* matters much to talented people; they'll only work in conditions that maximize their abilities and potential. They have options, alternatives and confidence; they are *less loyal* on one hand, and *less tolerant* on the other.

Leaders who seek to perform at the highest level know they need talented people (from both within and outside) because they know there are some special tasks and responsibilities that need to be addressed. The more talented the people, the higher their ability to live with ambiguity and the better the odds they can identify, define and scope the issues; solve the frustrating dilemmas and wicked problems; resolve the hidden tensions and incongruities; and overcome the barriers and obstacles.

## High Performance Cultures

The culture that leaders create is vital, not simply to win an award or have satisfied employees, but to drive business results and achieve superior performance. That is the only way to secure the necessary resources to implement the programs, create the tools and develop the talent that allows performance to be sustained.

*High performing cultures* attract the best; retain the best; bring out the best;

showcase the best; and reward the best. They seek to achieve superior results as long as they can. If so, they should realize the price they have to pay is in doing whatever it takes to create *winning conditions*—those that enable people to deliver results by creating a willingness to devote a higher share of their *discretionary investment*.

*Extrinsic motivation* will only take you so far—the more powerful enabler is *intrinsic volition*, and that can only emerge in a culture that understands how much the *contract* has been re-written. High performance is achieved when, among the talented people: *Inner restlessness* is high and constructively directed; *Intolerance* for stupidity and bureaucracy is high; *Impatience* to get results and improvement is high; *Intensity* is high and the focus crisp; and *Imagination* runs wild.

### Steps to Take, Actions to Consider

The success of the strategy depends on the culture. Great strategy needs to be augmented by great culture:
• *Monitor the culture* using a precise *dashboard* that includes: a *Thermometer* to track the heat; a *Tachometer* to track the metabolism; and a *Speedometer* to track forward progress.
• *Establish a baseline.* You need to know what you are dealing with.
• *Identify the gap.* There is no point avoiding bad news. The *worst truth* is still better than the *best lie*. If you're going to be serious about building a better, healthier culture, you'd better find what's broken or not working well, and address it—head on.
• *Think forward.* Most of us get some comfort from the past (warm memories and nostalgia), providing some temporary relief from the stresses and strains. However, the key to improve culture is to aim for a moving target, off in the future—you have to predict the future.
• *Enforce accountability.* Too often, the best intentions of leaders are not fulfilled—and the promise evaporates into thin air—because the *escape hatches* are left wide open and, when it was convenient, some people found it too tempting to avoid accountability.
• *Keep score.* The *joy of victory* is sweet. When you lift the trophy and look into the eyes of your opponents and see their disappointment, you do not so much gloat as be glad the game was played and you came out on top. In any game, you need to keep score. LE

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**ACTION: Create a healthy performance culture.**

# Leading Conflict
*Mediating in virtual teams.*

**by Yael Zofi**

CONFLICT CAN EITHER make or break your team. When conflicts occur virtually, issues get magnified because the non-verbal cues that enable understanding are missing. When you can't count on body language and facial expressions to *read* your colleague's responses, detecting and resolving conflicts becomes more challenging.

Virtual leaders need to ask: *how do you lead people who are not in sight out of conflict?* Conflict is often a byproduct of working on complex projects with tight deadlines with people of *diverse cultures*.

As a coach and consultant, I've dealt with many types of team conflict. On virtual teams, *four types of conflict* emerge:

*1. Performance conflict.* Reasonable people may differ about work-related issues: What tasks need to be performed—and how should they be carried out? Who needs what from a colleague or team? How do we clarify processes and procedures for those who need to know, but whose language skills make communication difficult? What is the best way to solve problem X? Although unresolved conflicts may lead to lower performance, *some conflict can energize performance*, if issues are quickly resolved.

*2. Identity conflict.* Virtual team members often report to multiple managers in matrixed organizations. Tension and confusion regarding priorities occur when colleagues switch back and forth between assignments. Many people serve on several projects simultaneously and may have an identity crisis when they must switch between tasks.

*3. Data conflict.* Since virtual teams rely on technology as a communications vehicle, information overload (the sheer volume of simultaneous communication) can bombard team members. Conflicts occur because individuals can't handle so much data at once; they may unintentionally forget or miss key details. Information overload causes stress, and losing track of key details can cause conflict if it results in certain tasks being neglected.

*4. Social conflict.* Personality clashes or *tensions* arise among people because of differing interpersonal styles. On a virtual team, members lack the time or opportunity to create strong relationships with teammates, thus creating misunderstandings. The flexibility of face-to-face contact, with direct (verbal) and nonverbal communication cues, is missing, making it tough to understand why people act a certain way.

To prevent these four types of conflict, build connections that create stable relationships among team members and enable more *effective communication* —become a *mediator* and *moderator*.

### Mediating Conflict in Calls

In virtual teams, mediation often takes place through conference calls. Before conducting a sensitive discussion by phone, **set five ground rules**: 1) recognize the importance of everyone's opinions; 2) deal with *realistic issues* that are solvable; 3) use *I* statements and *specific examples*; 3) acknowledge that everyone takes responsibility for creating, promoting or allowing the conflict; and 5) work together on solutions. In your role as a mediator, clarify expectations; encourage everyone to be honest and impartial.

Once ground rules are set, take *four steps*:

*Step 1.* Open the discussion without blaming anyone. Find commonalities to foster clear communication and motivate change. Call things as you see them as a referee or neutral party.

*Step 2.* Get each person's ideas and input first. Acknowledge all ideas without agreeing or disagreeing with them. Clarify issues and share information.

*Step 3.* Present and compare ideas to foster discovery/dialogue and move toward action. Clarify the *main conflict* and take *responsibility/ownership* for it.

*Step 4.* Specify actions and commit to plans. Get greater involvement by building cohesiveness, focusing on issues (not on people or personalities) and affirming direction, priorities, and plans. Remind teammates that they don't have to be best friends, but they do need to work together. Confirm your support, promote learning, and reach some level of problem solving.

*Take these four steps* to guide your virtual team from *conflict* to *resolution*. LE

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**ACTION: Become a masterful mediator of conflict.**

# Why Change Culture?

*You might destroy billions in shareholder value.*

**by Christopher Dawson**

WHY CHANGE YOUR culture? If your strategy isn't working, your *culture* (*the way we do things*) may be the reason. *Culture* includes values, attitudes, behaviors and capabilities.

*In assessing culture, all leaders face four questions*: 1) What are the expectations for value creation and CEO job security? 2) Will the current strategy create that value or require modification? 3) Does the right culture exist to execute that strategy? and 4) Is the right team in place?

It's likely that new leaders are in their positions because their predecessors failed to consider—and then act on—these four questions.

## Tailwind or Headwind?

Culture can serve as *tailwind* or *headwind*, and both impact strategy. Is there the *right culture* to execute our strategy or is the current culture an *obstacle* that requires corrective action?

*Culture becomes a headwind when strategy does not work, and market share is lost*. Morale is poor, and the best talent leaves. *Complacency* replaces *innovation*. Deadlines are missed, and departments blame each other. Worse, customers are unhappy. Value is *destroyed* rather than created. The company enters a cultural headwind when people are *slogging through the mud*. One sure sign of trouble is inefficiency, as the culture hinders strategy. A cultural headwind is a plan to fail, exemplified by the famous quip *culture eats strategy for breakfast*. The best strategy is useless with misaligned culture. A mediocre strategy might muddle through—if the culture creates tailwind; however, no amount of cultural headwind or tailwind will remedy a bad strategy— the essence of poor leadership.

*Strategy with tailwind energizes people and gives them confidence* about *getting there*, wherever the goal. Yet is there a singular best culture to help the company fulfill its strategy and create that mythic tailwind? No. The fast-paced, Silicon Valley culture that provides tailwind to Apple and Google might well be a headwind for cultures at other successful companies like Dow Chemical or Pacific Gas and Electric. There is no *magic bullet tailwind culture* as companies have discovered after cycling through fads. One example is People's Express and its publicized *Culture of Excellence*. People's Express is gone, and so is the culture.

Most executives recognize certain undesirable *universal culture headwinds*, such as deceiving employees regardless of the reason or ignoring what may well be their legitimate concerns. But beyond the list of *bad leadership cultures*, there is a remarkable range of cultures that act as *strategic tailwinds*—a powerful value-creating or value-destroying leverage point for top leadership. The more *culture tailwind* a strategy has, the more successful (faster, more enduring, better outcomes, more value creation) it will be. Determining *tailwind* or *head-*



*wind* can take months, even years, to play out. A *condition red* misalignment between strategy and culture can *destroy* value. For example, Blackberry-maker RIM and Blockbuster were companies that were *slow to adapt* to changing times wrought by smart phones and video streaming, destroying billions of dollars of their shareholders' value.

*Culture can be modified*—when leadership has the right understanding and tools. The question is always *why* and *how much* should be modified. First, the process requires evaluation— questions about culture perception:

• *Is it irrelevant because it is soft and fluffy and thus can be ignored?* Anyone who believes *culture is irrelevant and can be ignored* is ill-suited for leadership.

• *Is culture a fixed force of nature where nothing can be done but live with it and get out of the way?* Culture is a *force of nature*, but it can be modified.

• *Is it mechanical—just pull a few human resource levers and everything will follow?* Culture does have a *mechanical* aspect that can be powerfully influenced using human resource *levers* such as compensation and performance management.

• *Is culture personal—purely a reflection of leadership style past and present?* Culture is a reflection of top leaders' personal values and behaviors.

Ironically, these *partial truths* become *untrue* when embraced as absolutes.

## Changing Culture

Successful culture change has three critical and universal success factors:

*1. Make the case.* Having the right culture to execute strategy is the engine for change. People need *a reason commensurate with the magnitude of effort*; otherwise, why bother? This is an often-missed opportunity for top leadership to inspire, focus and mobilize.

*2. Create a roadmap.* Plans for culture change that only define an *inspiring vision* or talk forcefully about *the need for a new culture* without the strategy to back them up actually do more harm than good, since they raise false expectations. Create a roadmap: clearly articulate the current and new culture in ways that everyone can understand. This consists of a top leadership direction and more mechanical tracking and measurement metrics. Change initiatives need to be *prioritized*, *resourced*, and *managed*. Just how detailed, rigorous and extensive the roadmap depends on *the culture* and *magnitude of misalignment*.

*3. Keep it real.* If the behaviors of top leaders do not model the *to be* culture, the initiative quickly becomes a sham; for example, when companies talk passionately about an *ownership* or *accountability* culture, only to initiate reactive top-down decisions that usurp the motivation for ownership and preclude accountability, there's a disconnect. The *tailwind culture* quickly sours as people realize the *actual culture* represents different things. There is no quicker way to create *cultural headwinds* than by not paying close attention to the congruence between culture *talk* and *walk*.

Leaders create value by resolving all potential issues with *value creation*, *strategy*, *culture*, and *team execution*. Then, they determine the extent of the culture change. They ask about these *four questions* as they seek to create new value, and answer them by creating sustainable, long-standing value. They create an *enduring culture* capable of producing *new strategies* as conditions change.**LE**

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*ACTION: Create a performance culture.*

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