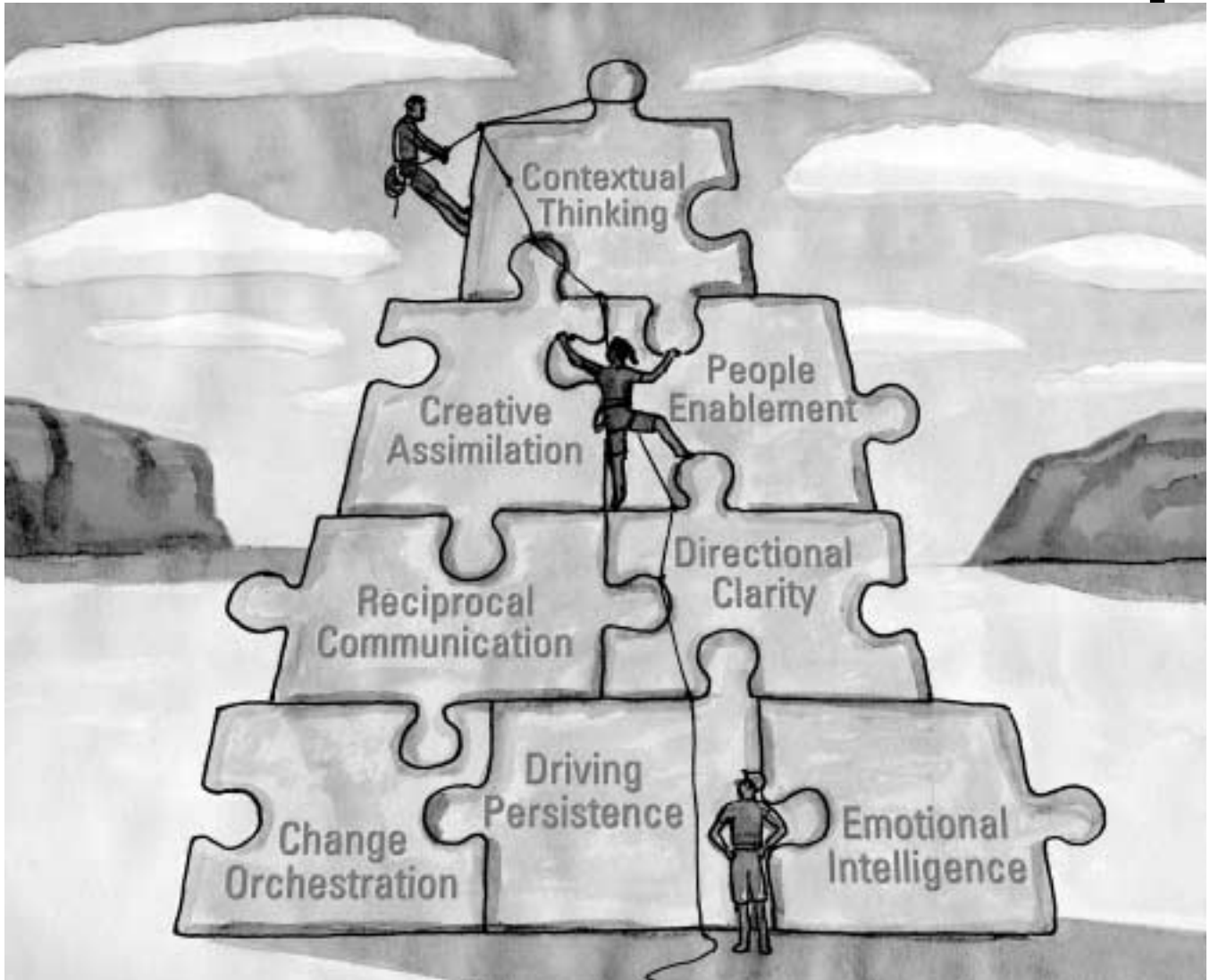


# Effective Leadership



**T**here seems to be no one definitive model for leadership excellence that can be carefully followed to ensure success. The style of one extremely effective leader might be in sharp contrast to the style of another who is equally successful. Fortunately, many of the best thinkers on the subject have identified some common characteristics. The themes emerging from their work suggest that leadership excellence can be defined in the following way:

#### **Leadership excellence:**

- **Is driven by a strong set of values**, and an “intelligence” about people’s feelings.
- **Sees possibilities and potential** that are often invisible to others.
- **Describes a vision of the future** and illuminates paths to get there.
- **Encourages creativity**, innovation, and lateral thinking.
- **Enables individuals and teams** or groups of people to manage personal change and reach for higher goals.
- **Involves guiding people’s relationships** with one another.
- **Means continually “walking-the-talk”** and listening and learning along the way.
- **Often consists of extraordinary strength** and persistence.

This list is by no means complete, nor should it be: it is the act of identifying the qualities that are present in great leaders that will be the most help as we decide what we should be doing ourselves to become a better leader. Out of hundreds, or thousands, of potential human behaviors, there are only a handful that are critical to good or effective leadership.

# 1 Learn.

Taking a good look at our strengths and weaknesses concerning the way we manage, inspire, and lead other people takes courage. We won't know until we're through what the final outcome will be if we take this self-reflection seriously, however. We might look at the list of what we *think* are our strengths and the list of what we *think* are our weaknesses and conclude that there are just too many mental and physical **boundaries, limitations, and restrictions** standing in the way of our becoming a good leader. And this might not be the case at all.

On the other hand, it might look like our **opportunities, options, and possibilities** are unlimited—that virtually nothing is strong enough to stand in our way. Once again, the reality might be quite different. Time and experience will tell.

The intensity of the educational process tends to leave young people with the notion that the learning part of their lives is complete after graduation—that personal learning and development cease when we enter the world of work. There are still others who believe that leaders are born rather than made, and that it is a waste of time to learn how to lead—the old *"You either have it or you don't"* attitude.

Obviously, both these views are faulty. A leader is expected to be more educated and knowledgeable than the people he or she leads—not about everything, but certainly about the organization and its mission, goals, and strategies. This kind of knowledge is acquired in the days and years *after* commencement, and the best and most successful leaders are always learning more.

Alexander Pope said something interesting about the subject:

**“A little learning is a dangerous thing.”**

It's dangerous *not* because of what we know, but of what we realize we have yet to learn!



# 1

You cannot expect to learn how to lead by simply attending a few training workshops or devouring the work of the latest business guru. Leadership involves much more than that. Start with a commitment and a good professional-development plan, and then follow the advice of Max Depree, who suggests that **the good leader needs to learn to become a servant to his or her followers.**

The advice is not meant to be taken literally, but it does convey the widely held belief that to inspire an entire group or even a small team of people, the leader needs to want to listen to and learn from the people they lead.

The implication is that good ideas can and will come from anywhere—even the most junior ranks of the organization! A leader's capacity to be open to ideas from every source has nothing to do with weakness. It is actually a demonstration of strength: knowledge is the province of the entire community. **It is the leader's job only to apply it wisely and well.**

The leader's thinking or conceptual ability to manage well is developed mainly through study and mental exercise, but its practical use can only become evident by applying it to one's personal interaction with the team. The effective leader, therefore, ideally passes on the desire for personal learning by encouraging, showing enthusiasm, and appreciating the skills and talents of others. Professional development is directly linked to interaction; knowledge and skills must be applied in day-to-day situations if one is to learn more.

All these things are part of the leader's emotional intelligence: to be as open as he or she can be, and to tap into the feelings of their team and encourage them to be open as well. The writer Daniel Goleman's ideas on the subject of emotional intelligence suggests that this softer side, this awareness of feelings in the self and in others, is the foundation upon which other leadership "competencies" are often built.



## 2

# Empower.

It is often said that good leaders work hard to establish an environment or a climate in which their followers can respond well. Leaders such as Gandhi were effective, in part, because they showed how to *enable* leadership.

Many athletic teams have captains who are not the stars of their team and do not bask in the limelight. However, they are able to mold their team, encourage others to greater heights, and make on-field decisions that make the best use of players and their skills. This booklet concentrates fundamentally on this leadership model: to lead effectively, it is critical that you have a deep understanding of the specific individuals and the groups to be led—their strengths, their weaknesses, their learning styles, their personal goals, and so on.

As the chart below indicates, leadership consists of an inspirational-motivational-visionary side that relies on aligning people with long-term goals and targets in order to help bind the team and win commitment. It also has what we call a “management” side, which relies on organizing people through decision-making processes and more formal systems.

The team needs to see both sides of the leader’s role. At different times and in different circumstances, one side will be more dominant than the other, but every successful leader learns how to keep a healthy balance of these key roles.

## The Essence of Leadership

A Strong Visionary but a Weak Manager	THE LEADERSHIP QUADRANT A Strong Visionary and a Strong Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visions detached from reality</li> <li>• Alignment without organization</li> <li>• Strategies lack a foundation of formal planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspirational visions and strategies</li> <li>• Widespread organizational alignment</li> <li>• Integrated planning</li> <li>• Full employee empowerment and commitment</li> </ul>
A Weak Visionary and a Weak Manager	A Strong Manager but a Weak Visionary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No vision or strategies</li> <li>• Out-of-control processes</li> <li>• Employee disaffection and frustration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processes grow more bureaucratic</li> <li>• Over-specialization</li> <li>• Evolving policies and procedures</li> <li>• Controls stifle innovation</li> </ul>

# 2

**A high performing, aligned, and motivated team needs to have a number of common values**, if it is to really succeed over the longer term. Test how much common ground there is within the group that is to be led as soon as possible.

There is no formula for coming to agreement on which values will be most important for a team to succeed. Values will vary according to experience and beliefs and their respective goals and aspirations, but it is the actual discussion of what is important to the team that is often of most value.



Many leaders avoid having such discussions; some think the debate will be too open-ended to be useful. *Nothing could be further from the truth.* An effective leader will seek to draw out what is important to team members and not be afraid to discuss differences and how they might be reconciled.

The first step to identifying team values is to start with the values of individuals: each person can list the three or five most important values to them, and then rank them. They are shared with the entire group and discussed in order to reach a common understanding.

A great many values will turn up on everybody's list. Look for common themes as well as differences that might need to be managed in the future. The team will have a better idea of commonly held views and beliefs and how consistent they are with the values in the organization.

In some cases, individual or team values will conflict with those of the organization; this will have to be addressed by the leader. For example, an organization might value analytical ability and conservatism (many financial institutions have such values, for instance). This would be likely to clash with an individual or a team that values broad conceptual ideas and risk-taking, or having the authority to make pragmatic decisions to save time.

A key part of the effective leader's role is, therefore, to focus on the capability of individuals and groups, and to make sure that people are helped to perform to the highest possible level and not have to compromise their own performance. To do this, leaders need to talk about **principles** rather than rules right from the outset. Principles bring purpose to the task or process in question while still allowing plenty of room for individuality and initiative. Rules by their very nature espouse a single prescriptive way that a task should be handled. Focusing on principles allows the organization to benefit from creative or more innovative thinking.

## 3

## Assess.

A broadly-based vision and good directional clarity will usually rally people to follow the leader's clarion call to arms and inspire the team to look beyond its most immediate and pressing problems. However, the vision itself rarely describes what it is that specifically needs to be done. The effective leader has to help individuals make the connection between what the team might be aiming for in a few weeks, months, or years and what the team needs to be doing tomorrow. **This connection is best made by setting short-term targets and goals.**

The history of effective leadership suggests that successful goal-setting almost wholly rests on whether or not the goals are congruent with the vision of the enterprise or the intrinsic needs of individuals or the team. In addition, these goals should be expressed in language that is entirely relevant to every individual in the organization.

The goal-setting step is a crucial one: A remarkable number of organizations that work hard to shape and then communicate their vision end up failing to set goals that would have helped to achieve that vision. More often than not, this is simply because the vision-setting exercise and the goal-setting process are mistakenly seen to be two separate activities.

It's not hard to understand why this misunderstanding occurs. Most organizations generally have some kind of process to set targets for the coming six- or twelve-month period. A visioning session, on the other hand, might only be held every four or five years or when the company changes hands. Sometimes it's held off-site, with a game of golf or some other social activity very high on the agenda.

A vision is like a train engine in as much as it has the power to pull the whole organization in a particular direction. The goals are like the train's cars in as much as they are given impetus and directional force by the vision (or engine of the train). Every goal must follow the vision and be consistent with it: If any goal has its own independent force and direction, the team or the enterprise will find itself losing focus and energy over a period of several months or years. When this happens, it won't be obvious; even the most senior managers will not notice the impact.



# 4 Decide.

It is important to set goals and targets, but if there is no way or will to measure for them, the targets are likely to remain only mildly interesting distractions.

A measurement system (in the context of leadership) does not have to be a complex process of establishing key performance indicators for every task or activity and then developing a series of monitoring or tracking indices and charts to be reviewed each day, week, or month. It can be quite simple: Just a broadly-based agreement of what will be measured and how, and a description of what will constitute good performance or outcomes versus bad ones.

**It it cannot be measured, it will not be managed.** Unfortunately, goals seem to apply here more than anything else. A goal that can't be measured will be vague, unspecific, intangible, or just plain confusing. It will also not be achieved (assuming anybody will be able to tell). Every individual goal must come with a way to tell whether or not it has been achieved. This measuring or evaluation tool should be such that you can apply the measure today and sometime in the future **in order to see whether there is a difference** in what was achieved over time.

Do not make the same mistake that many individuals and organizations make, believing that once a measure has been applied, it's just a matter of time before you see the progress. The next step is to determine whether you are on the right track. Ask yourself, **Are we measuring the right things?** The leadership writer Warren Bennis once described the difference between management and leadership as follows:

**“Management is climbing the rungs of the ladder as fast as we can. Leadership is making sure that the ladder is leaning against the right wall.”**

It is much more important to focus our goal efforts (the ladder) in the right direction than to measure fantastic performance in the wrong area. History is littered with stories of heroic efforts to achieve certain goals that turned out to be the wrong objectives in the first place.



# 4

It should be remembered that in business or in any other commercial organization, coaching is fundamentally concerned with helping people learn to develop themselves. The process usually involves identifying areas for improvement and then developing skills or competencies on the job or through informal or formal training sessions or higher education.

Good coaching is less concerned with “developing” other people but rather about focusing them on their own development goals and helping them to achieve them.

Effective coaches need to be able to work at three levels:

- **They need to work closely with people** one on one; give feedback; and set goals and tasks that will “stretch” people.
- **They need to set up a climate or environment** that encourages people to take the risk of doing things differently, and then learn from their experience.
- **They need to actively set up learning opportunities for individuals** by giving them the chance to work with different people; link them to others who can help their development; provide new work experiences; and give them access to people and situations that they would not be able to access easily on their own.

Coaching by leading is usually done on an ongoing basis. It starts with the leader coaching others by example, and then by adopting a “**telling and selling**” style. The ideal approach is to create a climate in which the individual and the team are allowed to do things by themselves—where they can learn by trying out their own ideas and experimenting.



## 5

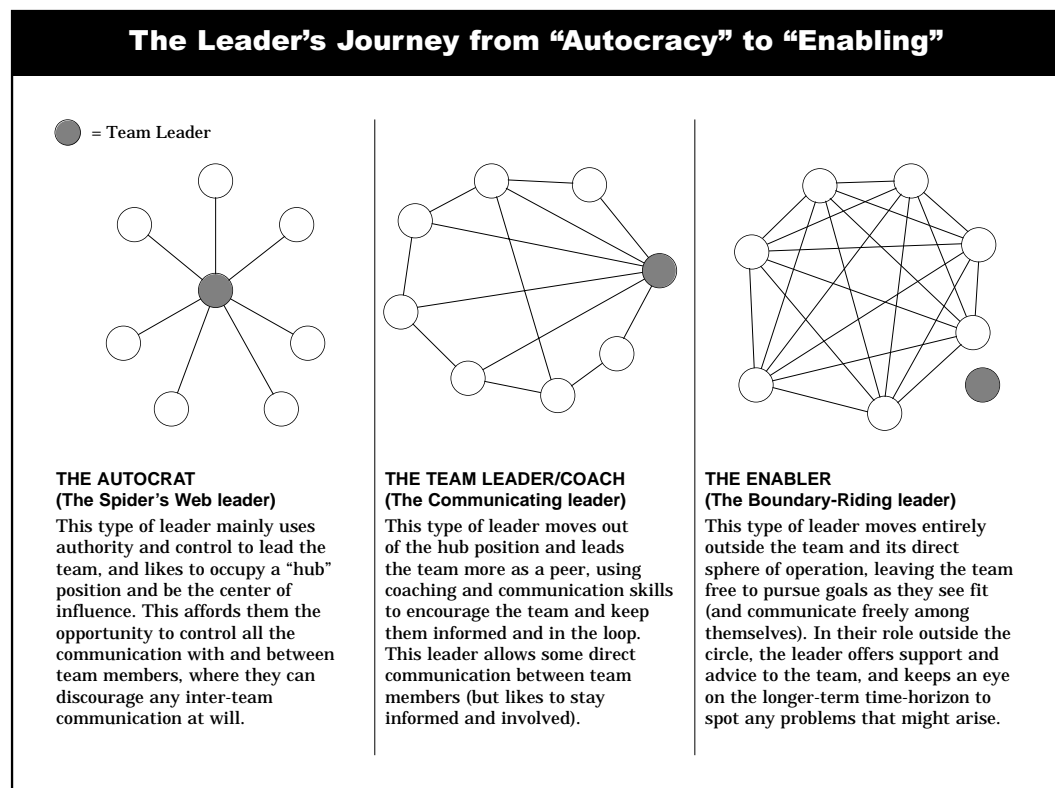
# Evaluate.

In much of the old thinking on the subject of leadership, motivation was more about **“command and control”** than about enabling or empowerment, and about **“stick”** rather than **“carrot.”** The leader was portrayed as the strong person, courageously and ostensibly out in front, with considerably more expertise than the group they were leading.

This strong leadership model has been deeply embedded in the Western psyche, and it has been hard to erase or modify. Truman, Churchill, Hitler, Mao Tse Tung, and Franco are all excellent political examples of such leadership. In all of these cases, their style is strong, and individualistic, but definitely black and white. Each of these world leaders, good or bad, liked to portray all of their leadership actions as decisive and very much their own.

Some people still admire and prefer these strong leadership styles, but current thinking has shifted considerably. Our models are much softer, “people-focused,” and far less individualistic. The new leader invites the team to pursue goals, rather than telling or ordering them, and their input on how goals are to be achieved is highly valued. In these circumstances, the leader’s role shifts dramatically: rather than standing out in front, he or she is content to stand behind, clearly supporting the team. This is the “servant” leadership role espoused by Greenleaf and Depree.

The model shown below illustrates a good way to think about the dramatic difference in the autocratic-leader versus the enabling leader (in which evaluation becomes a collective responsibility).



# 6 Review.



Whether the goals are individual or collective, it is an unusual team that does not like to win or at least move forward in the right direction toward its goals. In fact, if the team develops a group identity beyond the individuals that make it up, the collective successes will be more valued and eventually more significant.

The effective leader is wise to tap into this need to develop a team identity at a very early stage, and find ways in which to connect even the smallest wins to the work of the team and its group strength as it works toward achievement of collective goals.

The nature of any success or win is often far less important than the way in which the leader chooses to celebrate it.

If every genuine step forward is recognized honestly and the more significant wins are celebrated with a wider audience, it is likely that the spirit and morale of the team will remain extremely high. This will make the leader's job easier, as well.

As each new project arises, follow the same process of encouraging ideas: First, practically and methodically prioritize team suggestions. Next, exhaustively weigh the pros and cons of each. Everyone's involvement and effort should be acknowledged, however impractical or off the mark their ideas might appear.

If the leader explains why some suggestions are not feasible, it will clear up any specific misapprehensions or misunderstandings. The whole team will feel much more confident about voicing even their wildest and most creative thoughts.

The constant encouragement of ideas is best done face-to-face with the team, not in memos or on the phone. It gives everyone the opportunity to listen to each other and build on the ideas generated.

Ineffective leaders tend to steal the glory, even when their contribution is small. Acting conceited and taking all the credit will cause resentment and erode trust. Eventually, people will stop generating ideas because they feel that they are being used.

Avoid coming across as an autocratic leader who knows everything. Effective leaders are always learning from their team, as well as imparting what they know. The goal is to share knowledge and expertise and helpful suggestions with the team members, including the leader.

# 6

Honest feedback can lift the human spirit. Without feedback, no one knows whether their performance is minimum level or even better-than-average. If the individual or the team begins to feel unappreciated, standards will start to fall and perfectly competent and efficient employees will look for other organizations where their hard work is more likely to be appreciated.

This is an important factor in effective leadership. Money and promotion are not the greatest motivating forces. A leader can throw incentives at a team, but without telling people why they are deserving, they will not know what skills or behavior earned them their reward in the first place and should thus be continued.

Recognition of a job well done should be consistent and frequent, because this keeps the momentum going. Individuals need to be reassured that they are going in the right direction and at an appropriate pace. The rewards in terms of high morale and incremental effort can be enormous when people see their efforts valued and appreciated.

Match the degree of praise or corrective feedback to the size and nature of the accomplishment. Minor recognition for major achievements and significant rewards for minor contributions send confusing messages. Be consistent if you want consistent results. This applies equally to mistakes and poor work practices.

The leader must be vigilant about rewarding and celebrating team success when it is deserved. Regular reviews of progress, however, should only be done openly, and action should follow. Formal reviews can show the team how one success led to another, and allow the leader and the team to analyze any mistakes or failures in order to avoid repeating them in the future.



# Effective Leadership: Template

**Review:**  
Progress  
People  
Success



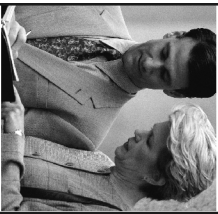
How?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Learn:**  
About yourself  
About others  
About possibilities



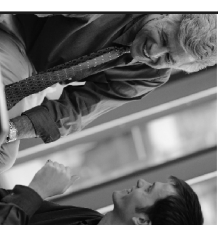
How?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluate:**  
Performance  
Behavior  
Teamwork



How?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Empower:**  
Individuals  
The team  
The organization



How?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Leadership Checklist	
KEY QUESTIONS	NOTES
1. Am I clear about my own leadership strengths and potential shortfalls?	
2. Do I truly understand the people whom I am expected to lead?	
3. Is there a clear understanding of the way ahead?	
4. Have I taken enough time to plan effectively and efficiently?	
5. Do I have an effective ongoing communication strategy?	
6. Am I ready to give individuals the freedom to act that they need?	
7. Have I developed a clear and concise set of goals and strategies?	
8. Have I allocated tasks and projects appropriately to people, according to their strengths and interests?	
9. Am I sufficiently and consistently appreciative of people's feelings and emotions?	
10. Are the activities of all individuals well coordinated, with good feedback mechanisms in place?	
11. Do we take sufficient time to plan, reflect, and learn from our mistakes?	
12. Do we have efficient and effective decision-making processes at all levels?	

**Decide:**  
Means  
Methods  
Measures



How?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Assess:**  
Strategies  
Goals  
Targets



How?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_