

# Four Roles of a Leader

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*The leader of the future, of the new millennium, will be one who creates a culture or a value system centered upon principles.*

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## A White-water World

The world has changed in a very profound way. This change continues to happen all around us, all the time. It is a white-water world. The consumer revolution has accelerated enormously. People are so much more enlightened and aware. There are so many more dynamic, competitive forces operating. The quality standards have raised to the point, particularly in the global market place, that there is simply no way to fake it. You may be able to survive in a local marketplace without meeting these standards, perhaps even in a regional marketplace, but certainly not in a global marketplace.

In all sectors—business, government, healthcare, social, non-profit, etc.—the marketplace is demanding that organizations transform themselves. They must be able to produce services and goods and deliver them in a fast, friendly and flexible way, and on a consistent basis that serves the needs of the customers (both internal and external). This requires a workforce who is not only allowed, but is enabled, encouraged and rewarded to give of its full creativity and talent. Even though tens of thousands of

organizations are deeply involved in quality initiatives designed to produce those very results, transformation is still being demanded. The fundamental reason why most quality initiatives do not work is because there is a lack of trust in the culture—in the relationships between people. Just as you cannot fake world-class quality, so also is it impossible to fake high trust. It has to come out of trustworthiness.

I put more faith, however, in what the global economy is doing to drive quality than in any other factor. It is teaching us that principles such as empowerment, trust, trustworthiness, etc. ultimately control the effective results we seek.

## Modeling

The most effective leaders are first models of what I call principle-centered leadership. They have come to realize that we're all subject to natural laws or governing principles, and that these operate regardless of our awareness of them or our obedience to them. Our effectiveness is predicated upon alignment with these inviolate principles—natural laws in the human dimension that are just as real, just as unchanging, as

laws such as gravity are in the physical dimension. These principles are woven into the fabric of every civilized society and constitute the roots of every organization that has endured.

To the degree that we recognize and live in harmony with such basic principles as fairness, service, equity, justice, integrity, honesty, and trust, we move toward either survival and stability on the one hand or disintegration and destruction on the other. Principles are self-evident, self-validating natural laws. In fact, the best way to know they are self-evident is by trying to imagine a world, or for that matter, any effective, enduring society, organization or family based upon its opposite.

Correct principles are like compasses: They are always pointing the way. They don't change or shift. And if we know how to read them, we won't get lost, confused, or fooled by conflicting voices and values. They provide "true north" direction to our lives when navigating the "streams" of our environments.

So the first role of the leader is to be a model of principle-centered leadership.

Whenever we're principle-centered or when an organization is principle centered, the person or organization becomes a model to other people and organizations, an example. It is that kind of modeling, that kind of character, competence and action that produces the trust among the people so that they identify with this modeling and are influenced by it. Modeling, then, is a combination of character (who you are as a person) and competence (what you can do). That is your potential. But when you actually do it—when you put action together with character—you've got modeling.

What is it, then, that the principle-centered leader models? Essentially, I suggest you can break leadership into three basic functions or activities: Pathfinding, Aligning, Empowering. These represent the three remaining roles of a leader. Let's explore each one in turn:

### Pathfinding

The essence and power of pathfinding is found in a compelling vision and mission. It deals with the larger sense of the future. It is getting the culture imbued and excited about a tremendous, transcendent purpose. But in relation to what? To meeting the needs of your customers and other stakeholders. Pathfinding, then, is the tying together of your value system and vision with the needs of customers and other stakeholders through a strategic plan. I call this the strategic pathway.

### Aligning

The second activity of a leader is aligning. It is assuring that your organizational structure, systems and operational processes all contribute toward achieving your mission and vision of meeting customer and other stakeholder needs. They don't interfere with it; they don't compete with it, they don't dominate it. They're only there for one purpose—to contribute to it. Far and away the greatest leverage of this principle of alignment comes when your people are in alignment with your mission, vision and strategy. When your people are filled with true understanding of the needs, when they share a powerful commitment to accomplishing the vision, when they are invited to create and continually improve the structures and systems that will meet the needs, then you've got alignment. Without these human conditions, you cannot have world-class quality. All you have are brittle programs. Ultimately, we must learn that programs and systems are vital, but that people are the programmers.

### Empowering

The third activity of a leader is empowering. What does that mean? People have enormous talent, ingenuity, intelligence, creativity. Most of it lies dormant. When you get true alignment toward a common vision, a common mission, you begin to commission with those people. Individual purpose and mission is co-mingled with the mission of the organization. When these

purposes overlap, great synergy is created. A fire is ignited within people that unleashes their latent talent, ingenuity, and creativity to do whatever is necessary and consistent with the principles agreed upon to accomplish their common values, vision and mission in serving customers and other stakeholders. This is what we mean by empowerment.

But then you have to study what happens. What are the results? Are we really meeting the needs of the customers and the other stakeholders? Data and information that indicate whether the needs are truly being met must be fed back to these empowered people and teams inside the culture so that they can use it to make the necessary course corrections and improvements, and continue to do whatever it takes to fulfill the mission and to serve the needs.

### A New Paradigm of Leadership

These roles of modeling principle-centered leadership, pathfinding, aligning and empowering represent a paradigm that is different in kind from traditional management thinking. There is a very significant difference between management and leadership. Both are vital functions, and because they are, it's critical to understand how they are different so one isn't mistaken for the other. Leadership focuses on doing the right things; management focuses on doing things right. Leadership makes sure the ladders we are climbing are lean-

ing against the right wall; management makes sure we are climbing the ladders in the most efficient ways possible. Most managers and executives operate within existing paradigms or ways of thinking, but leaders have the courage to surface those paradigms, identify the underlying assumptions and motivations, and to challenge them by asking, “Does this still hold water?”

For example:

- In health care, new leaders might challenge the assumption that medicine should focus upon the diagnosis and treatment of disease. Some medical schools today don’t even teach nutrition, even though one-third of all cancers are nutrition-related and two-thirds of all diseases are tied to lifestyle. Still, the medical community heads down the path of diagnosis and treatment of disease. They claim that they deal with the whole package—the health and welfare of people—but they have a treatment paradigm. Fortunately, new leaders are creating more preventive-medicine alternatives.
- In law, new leaders might challenge the assumption that law is best practiced in courtrooms using confrontational, win-lose litigation. They might move toward the use of synergy and win-win thinking to prevent and settle disputes. Alternative dispute resolution usually results in compromise. New

leaders will seek “win-win or no deal” options that lead to synergy. Synergy is more than cooperation; it’s creating better solutions. It requires empathic listening and courage in expressing views and opinions in ways that show respect for the other person’s view. Out of genuine interaction come synergistic insights.

- In business, new leaders will challenge the assumption that “total customer satisfaction” represents the ultimate service ethic. They will move toward total stakeholder satisfaction, caring for all who have a stake in the success of the operation. They make decisions that benefit all stakeholders, all who have a stake in the success of the organization. To bring about this new mindset, leaders must develop a new skill set of synergy. Synergy comes naturally from the quality of the relationship—the friendship, trust, and love that unites people.

If you can put the new skillset of synergy together with the new mindset of interdependency, you have the perfect one-two punch for achieving competitive advantage. When you have the mindset and skillset, you create effective structures, systems, and processes and you align these with your vision and mission. Every organization is perfectly designed and aligned to get the results it gets. If you want different results, you need a new mindset and a new skill set to create synergistic solutions. It’s only enlightened self-interest to keep all stakeholders in

mind when making decisions because we are so interdependent.

## Who is the Leader of the Future?

In many cases, the “leader of the future” will be the same leader of the present. There will be no change in personnel, but rather an internal change within the person who becomes the leader of the future by an inside-out transformation. What drives leaders to change, to become more centered on principles?

I think the main source of personal change is pain—pain from disappointment, failure, death, troubled or broken relationships with family or friends, violated trust, personal weakness, discouragement, boredom, dissatisfaction, poor health, consequences of poor decisions, loneliness, mediocrity, fear, financial stress, job insecurity, life imbalance, etc. If you aren’t feeling pain, there is rarely enough motivation or humility to change. Most often there just isn’t a felt need. Without personal pain, people tend to be too deeply invested in themselves and their own world to rise above their own interests or the politics of running things—both at work and at home. When people are experiencing personal pain, they tend to be more open to a new model of living where the common elements of humility and personal sacrifice lead to inside-out, principle-centered change.

Again, the primary driving force of organizational change is the

global economy. The standard of quality is now so high that unless you have an empowered work force and the spirit of partnership with all stakeholders, you can't compete, whether you work in the private sector, public sector, or social sector.

When you're facing competitors who think more ecologically and interdependently, eventually the force of circumstances drives you to be humble. That's what's driving the quest for quality, learning, process re-engineering, and other initiatives. But many of these initiatives don't go far enough. The mindshift was not great enough. The interests of all stakeholders must be dealt with in an orchestrated way.

We're either forced by circumstance to be humble, or we can choose to be humble out of recognition that principles ultimately govern. To be humble is good, regardless of the reason. But it's better to be humbled by conscience rather than circumstance.

### The Leader of the Future—A Family Within

The leader of the future has the humility to accept principles, and the courage to align with principles, which takes great personal sacrifice. Out of this humility, courage and sacrifice comes the person of integrity. In fact, I like to think of this kind of leader as having an entire family within them: humility and courage the parents, and integrity the child.

Humility says "I am not in con-

rol; principles ultimately govern and control." It understands that the key to long-term success is learning to align with "true north" principles. That takes humility because the traditional mindset is: "I am in control; my destiny lies in my hands." This mindset leads to arrogance—the sort of pride that comes before the fall.

Leaders of the future will have the courage to align with principles and go against the grain of old assumptions or paradigms. It takes tremendous courage and stamina to say: "I'm going to align my personal value system, my lifestyle, my direction, and my habits with timeless principles." Courage is the quality of every quality at its highest testing point. Every virtue gets tested ultimately at the maximum. That's where courage comes to play. When you confront an old approach directly, you experience the fear of ripping out an old habit and replacing it with something new.

Out of the marriage of humility and courage is born the child of integrity. We all want to be known and remembered as men and women of integrity. Integrity suggests integrating ourselves with principles. The leaders of the future must be men and women of integrity who internalize these principles. They grow in wisdom and cultivate an abundance mindset. If you have integrity, you are not caught up in a constant state of comparison with others. Nor do you feel the need to play political games,

because your security comes from within. As soon as you change the source of your security, everything else flows from it. You have greater power, wisdom, security, and guidance because you constantly draw upon the strength of these principles as you apply them.

### A Final Note

We are becoming increasingly and painfully aware of the perilous weakening of our social structure. Drugs, gangs, illiteracy, poverty, crime, violence, breakdown of the family, etc., all continue in a downward spiral. Leaders of the present are beginning to recognize that these social problems put at risk every aspect of society. The leaders of the future realize that the solution to these problems are far beyond the ability of those sectors that have traditionally been looked toward to deal with such problem—namely the government and social sectors. My intent is not to criticize these sectors. In fact, I believe that they would be the first to admit that they are bound to fail without a broader network of helping hands.

The problem is that, on the whole, there has been a marked weakening of a sense of volunteer responsibility of neighborhoods, communities, churches, families and individuals. It has become too easy to absolve ourselves from this responsibility to our communities. Too often such hand washing is done in the name of government and working women. I believe it is a family responsibility and that everyone should have a sense of

stewardship about the community—every man, every woman and every child. There should be some real sense of stewardship around service on the part of young people and particularly when they get to their most idealistic ages, 17, 18, 19, 20 and so forth.

The leader of the future will be a leader in every area of life—especially family life. The enormous needs and opportunities in society represent a great responsibility toward service. There is no place where this spirit of service can be cultivated like in the home. The spirit of the home and also of the school is that we are preparing you to go forth and serve. You are supposed to serve. Life is a mission, not a career. The whole spirit of this philosophy should pervade our society. I also think it is a source of happiness, because you don't get happiness

directly. It only comes as a by-product of service. You can get pleasure directly, but it is so fleeting.

How, then, do we influence our children toward the spirit of service and meaningful contribution? First, we must look inward. Am I a model of this principle of service myself? Does my family see me dedicating my time and abilities to serving them and the community? Second, have I taken time to immerse myself and my family in the needs of others in the community and created a sense of vision about how our family and each of us as individuals can make unique and meaningful contributions to meet those needs (pathfinding)? Third, have I, as a leader in my home, aligned the priorities and structures of our life so that this desire to serve is supported, not undermined? Finally, have I created conditions and opportunities in

the home that will empower my children to serve? Do I encourage and support the development of their minds and talents? Do I organize service opportunities for the entire family, and do all I can to create a fun environment around those activities? Regardless of the answers to these questions—even if it is a unanimous “No,”—we all have the capacity to decide what our lives will be about from today on.

This inherent capacity to choose, to develop a new vision for ourselves, to re-script our life, to begin a new habit or let go of an old one, to forgive someone, to apologize, to make a promise and then keep it, etc., in any area of life is, and always has and will be a moment of truth to every true leader.

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